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THE
PRACTICE
OF
RELIGION
Recommended as Excellent and Reasonable,
IN THREE
SERMONS.

By JAMES DUCHAL, M. A.



L O N D O N :

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THE
P R E F A C E.

I Cannot say that I was urged, or, indeed, once desired, by any Person, to publish these SERMONS. But they contain Meditations which have been of Service to my self; and, for that Reason, I thought they might be of some Use to others; and so have ventured to offer them to publick View. I hope the Reader will find Truth in them; and as many Things laid together, as could well

P R E F A C E.

*be crowded into so little Room.
But I cannot say any more for this
Attempt, perhaps, a very rash
one: Yet, surely, it is a very
honest one; and as such I most
humbly commend it to the divine
Acceptance, and also to the Rea-
der's Candour.*

J. D.



S E R-



S E R M O N I.

PROV. VIII. 6.

Hear, for I will speak of excellent Things.



ME N are, and must be, affected towards the Objects with which they are conversant, according to the Views that they have of them, and their Apprehensions concerning them. Things that appear to be good and amiable, cannot but be loved; those that seem to be hurtful, or otherwise disagreeable, cannot but be disliked. And if Men would alter their Habits of Love, or Aversion, towards any Object, it must not be, by attempting to force the Affections, or Choice, which is impossible; but by endeavouring to represent Things to the Mind, in another Light, and by correcting its mistaken Apprehensions. Thus, and no otherwise, we may come to love, what has been long hateful, and to hate that which was formerly pleasing. To apply this to the Habits of Religion and
B
Vertue,

Vertue, if Men are found averſe to theſe, the beſt Means for curing them, is a Representation of Vertue, to the Mind, as profitable and lovely; and if they can habitually conſider it in this Light, they cannot hate, they cannot but chooſe it. The only Cauſe of their Averſion is an Errour, in what has been often called the *Practical Judgement*, ariſing from the Prejudices of their Minds. And whatever does effectually correct that Errour, will alſo remove that Averſion. For it is certain, that if we could ſee and conſider Things, according to Truth, and as they are in their own Nature, we could not but *hate Evil, and love the LORD*. And therefore one would think, it ſhould be a main Part of the Buſineſs of Preachers, to remove Mens Prejudices againſt Religion, and to ſet it in the faireſt Light they can.

I believe the Averſions of many againſt it, ariſe from their Apprehenſions concerning it, as a Thing unnatural, and unpleaſing, and which cannot fit eaſy and free upon one's Mind. That Happineſs, that is the Fruit of Holineſs, is ſuſpected, merely becauſe it is the Fruit of it; and by the unmanly Idea's Men have of Religion, they are ſcared from the nobleſt Objects, and from the worthieſt and moſt ſatiſfying Manner of Life, becauſe there is a neceſſary Connexion between them and it. Religion is uſually preſented to the Mind at firſt, as a Thing exceedingly awful and ſevere; and Impreſſions of this Kind, do very often
take

take Place so much, that they scarcely leave any Room for a Sense of its Beauties and Excellencies : So it suffers in our Imaginations as irksome and unnatural, as every Thing that's awful, if it does not at the same Time appear to be most desirable and lovely, must needs do. And Men do often carry these childish Prejudices with them into all the Stages of Life, and consider Religion as a Thing that they would rather be without, and which is not effectually recommended otherwise than by the Fears of Punishment : And if they could find a safe Sanctuary from the one, they would very willingly bid Farewel to the other. This is one Prejudice against Religion, that has very bad Effects ; although there are others, that arise from other Causes, which may prove more obstinate, and of worse Consequence.

My Design in this Discourse, is, as much as I can, to obviate the Prejudice, now mentioned, and to shew Religion stripped of every unnatural Dress. To shew that in the Practice of it, the truest Excellency and Dignity of human Life do consist ; and that a wise Man would choose to be religious for the same Reason (though it is among many others) that he would rather feed on cleanly, wholesome Victuals, than upon what is putrified and corrupted ; that he would rather appear in creditable Apparel, than be cloathed with Rags ; that he would rather wear a Diamond, than a Pebble upon his Finger. *My mouth shall speak*

of excellent things, saith *Eternal Wisdom*. These Things are excellent in their own Nature, they are so in Respect of their Usefulness to us.

Now here are the following Subjects to be distinctly considered.

First, That there is a real Difference between Things, as to the Worth and Excellency of them.

Secondly, That those Things that are the most excellent, are the most agreeable to the rational Taste, and give the greatest Pleasure.

Thirdly, That Religion in its Nature and Fruits is excellent: Not only more so, than Irreligion, which is just the Reverse to every Thing worthy; but also that it is more excellent than a State of mere Innocence, without Vertue and Religion, if such a State could be supposed.

Fourthly, That therefore it must be the most pleasing.

I. That there is a real Difference between Things, with Respect to the Worth and Excellency of them. Excellency, you know, is a Term, that, taken strictly, signifies the Idea that we have of a Thing, compared with something else which in Value it exceeds. And this Idea we get as soon as any other, and there is

is such a Difference, between the Objects we converse with, that we cannot help getting it. This No-body will deny, or question. Now sometimes this Idea is taken from some very great and evident Worth of a Thing in its own Nature; and sometimes again, merely from the *Manner* in which Things affect us, though there is not any apparent Excellency in the Nature of them. So we speak of Things that have an excellent Taste, or Smell, or Colour, though all this means no more, than that these Objects are so formed, or modified, that they give us Pleasure, and that we have Powers and Senses that make us capable of Gratification by them. For without Question, there may be other Things, in themselves not less excellent, that do not so affect us. And there may be Creatures so formed, that they cannot but dislike the Things that are pleasing to us, and even count them abominable. The same may be said of Usefulness. What is very fit to serve its particular End, is called excellent, though this denotes only the Fitness of it to serve that Purpose. So an Herb may be excellent in Medicine, which is much exceeded both in Taste and Beauty by many others, and in every Thing else, that particular Virtue only excepted. But it is to my present Purpose, to consider chiefly that absolute Worth by which Things are in themselves preferable one to another. And this may be, either in their *original Nature*, or derived to them

them by some particular Modification that recommends them to our Esteem : So that which has Abundance of Art and Contrivance in it, we account excellent, and preferable much to other Things, that shew less of these; as a finely varied Flower, or a curious Machine; although Matter, with such artful Modification, is in its own Nature the same, as without them, and no one Part of it preferable to another. Other Things have *original* Worth, and of which we can form no Idea but as excellent; so Thought is, doubtless, a nobler Thing than Matter. And there's no Man that has a Cast of Understanding so absurd, as to think, that Power, and Wisdom, and Choice, are not preferable to any known, I may add, to any possible Quality of meer Body. And in the different Orders of intellectual Being, those that have the most of Wisdom, Benevolence, and Power, are the most excellent, and he that has these Perfections to Infinity, is infinitely so.

This Distinction has Place in Life, according to its various Gradations; there is more real Worth in the animal, than there is in the vegetative Life; and in the animal World some Creatures excel others; so a Lion is a nobler Creature than an Oyster, and the human Life is more excellent than that of a Brute.

It may be applied also to the various Stations and Business of human Life: For Example; there is more Dignity in a Life that's
spent

spent in Affairs of Importance, and in doing most signal Services to the World, than in one that is private and retired, and worn out in the lower Services of Mankind. So the Life of the Apostle PAUL, and the Station he held, had more Dignity in it, than that of a private Christian. And the Life of CONSTANTINE the Great, was of greater Moment than that of any private Soldier in his Army, supposing their moral Worth to be equal. A private Christian might, for ought I know, be as devout, and as sound a Believer as the Apostle himself, but moved in a much lower Sphere, and was less significant by far. A Subject might in his proper Station be as good a Man as CONSTANTINE, but certainly could not be accounted so great an one.

It must be also applied to the Tempers of Men, and their Actions in Life: So who questions, but that there is in Courage and Faithfulness, in Generosity and Benevolence, a real Excellency, and that the contrary Qualities are mean and dishonourable? Who but admires the brave young DAVID, and wishes well to him, while he goes to vindicate the *Armies of the living* GOD, from the Affronts that GOLIAH offered to them; and hates the Man, who afterwards, instead of rewarding him as he deserved, would have perfidiously cut him off? Who but must admire the unshaken Resolution of * HANANIAH and his

* DAN. iii.

Companions, in opposing the greatest Man upon Earth, that they might preserve good Consciences, while he pities the weak Apostle that denied his Master?

And, Lastly, the Enjoyments of Life are distinguished by a real Worth, in which some excel others. So a serene Mind is certainly better than a plentiful Table; great Understanding is much to be preferred before great Riches; the Pleasures of the Mind are more excellent than those of Sense; and the Delights of the heavenly State, than any Thing we can have on Earth. More, one would think, needs not to be said, to shew that there are many Things that really excel others in original, or in derived Worth; the former is chiefly to be considered, seeing Things that are in their very Nature excellent, will be for ever so.

II. The next Thing is, to shew that those Things that are the most excellent, must be most agreeable and pleasing to the rational Taste. Reason distinguishes Things excellent; and so, whilst we have Reason, we must have an approving Sense of Excellency, as being no other than the necessary Effect of that Judgement, which we form of an Action, or Thing, according to the Nature of it. And this Sense of Worth must be the same in all Beings that are endowed with Reason, for the Eye of Reason is still the
same

same. Indeed where Reason is not concerned as the Judge, the same Things may be agreeable to some Sort of Beings, and hateful to others; and this will, and must, be according to the various Organs and Senses of these Beings, which may be so formed, that the same Object shall affect them very differently. But where Reason is Judge; what is excellent, and therefore pleasing, to one, must be universally so. It does not prove what has been here said to be untrue, that we often find Men capable of discerning, by Reason, many Things to be excellent, in which they have no Delight; and that many Things please and delight, which Reason pronounces to be not only not excellent, but mean and vile. For in that Case the Judgement of Reason is overborn by some imperious Appetite, that perverts the Mind, and spoils the Taste. But yet it remains true, that as we are endowed with Reason, we have also a Taste for discerning Things excellent; and when this Taste prevails, the most excellent Things will be also the most pleasing. So it always will be when the Mind is not perverted, and under the Power of Prejudice. And this is all that is intended to be here proved. It would be a manifest Contradiction to Fact, to assert, That Things that are the most excellent, do always most please Men. But that Things that are the most excellent, are capable of yielding most Delight and Satisfaction, where Reason
C prevails,

prevails, and a Man's Taste is not spoiled, is the very Truth. For a violent Appetite, and an erring Imagination, may impose upon Men, and magnify the Pleasure that inferiour Things yield: But it is very certain, that this Imagination, magnify as it will, cannot find a Pleasure in the inferiour Object that is specifically different from any Thing in it, and more excellent in Kind. Mean Objects may be so magnified by a partial Fancy, that they shall greatly please; but those Things that are specifically more excellent, recommended by Reason, and cordially chosen, will please much more. A Man may think he has hold of the Substance, while he catches at the Shadow; but certainly a Sensation of the Substance would affect him in another Manner, than any Apprehensions about the Shadow can do. This Reasoning, it must be owned, contradicts an old Maxim, that has been pretty generally received, *viz.* That he is compleatly happy that thinks himself so; and that a Man, that is perfectly pleased with his Condition, however mean and inconvenient, is as happy as he can be. But these Assertions are not true, as appears by what has been already said; and this will be farther illustrated afterwards. In a Word, while we have Reason, we must have a Sense of Excellency, which makes us capable of Delight in Objects, that will be proportionable to the various Degrees of Excellency that are found in them.

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We may consider this farther, as it appears in some Instances. Let us take BELSHAZZAR and DANIEL *. Suppose them to be both happy in their Way, and enjoying what they liked best. Let BELSHAZZAR be as happy as he could wish in his Rioting and Debauchery; we are certain, that he had not such Sensations of Delight, as the Wisdom, and Knowledge, and Vertue of DANIEL gave him: And that DANIEL, in the Enjoyment of these superior Pleasures, was by much the happier Man of the two. We know also, that BELSHAZZAR was capable of this angelical Pleasure, could he have renounced his Debauchery, and have turned his Endeavours to the improving of his Mind. So that granting, he was pleased and content with the mean and gross Delights of Sense, yet he might have been much more pleased and satisfied with the Delights of the Mind. If, to take an Instance or two out of Prophane History, we compare the Lives of TARQUIN (the last of the *Roman* Kings) and BRUTUS; he must be blind indeed, that does not see a Beauty in the latter, that is not in the former: And must not the Vertue of BRUTUS give him a Sensation of Delight, in his Temper and Actions, much nobler than a Man could have, whose Spirit was mean and base. Let TARQUIN be as happy in the Outrages of Tyranny, as you can suppose him; it is impossible he should have Delight and Satisfacti-

* DAN. V.

on equal to that of his brave Enemy. No magnifying of the Delights that are in Cruelty (if there can be any) or tyrannical Power, could possibly entertain the Mind of the one, as a Consciouſness to worthy Designs, and approved Vertue, must entertain the other. The same may appear in a Comparison of NERO and SENECA, and in a great many other Instances, which will readily occur to your Minds. An illiterate Person may account the Company he converses with, and their noisy Mirth, and coarse Jest, the best that can be; but were he capable of the Delight that's found in elegant and improving Conversation, he would taste a Pleasure in it, that he could never have imagined. His old Company pleased him; but the Pleasure he had in that, could be no Way comparable to what he should find in this. The Child thinks his Toys are the most considerable Things; but that is, because he knows no manly Delight. Now, as there is no Man, but what is endowed, less or more, with a Power of discerning Things that are excellent, and therefore with a Capacity of the Delight they yield: So the Improvement of this Capacity into a standing Relish for such Delight, will give him a richer Pleasure in the Possession of Things excellent, than any magnifying Fancy could ever furnish him with in Things that are mean. That is, in one Word, Reason and Truth will find a more exalted

exalted Delight in the Enjoyment of Things really excellent, than ever Fancy can in Things that are only imagined to be so.

I own, with Respect to many Things, that affect only our present State, there is no great Difference in the Nature of them; and so that's the best, and most pleasing, that every Man thinks to be so. One Colour, or Shape of a Garment, may please one Man, and another may please another; they may choose directly opposite, and, for ought I know, be equally pleased. And so it is with Respect to many Things that are counted of greater Importance than these. But where there is a manifest Difference in the Nature of the Things, and one of them, confessedly, much more excellent than another, it cannot be so. For Reason is a Thing not to be contradicted, and the Nature of Things is not to be changed by any Imagination of ours concerning them. A Man of a mean Taste may not relish Things excellent, he may have an Aversion against that which is most so, and account himself very happy in low Delight. He may think himself more happy than the Man of Virtue, and of a fine Taste; but he is really not so. It is impossible a Man should have so much Pleasure in a Fit of Debauchery; as ABRAHAM had, when he returned from offering his Son to GOD; or as DAVID had in conquering GOLIAH. And that same Person, that one while delights only in the Pleasures of
Sense;

Sense; let him but get into another Way of Thinking, let him but get Habits of Vertue; and he will then taste a Pleasure much more solid and satisfying, than ever he dreamed of before; and will heartily despise his former Entertainment, when compared to it. Just so the young Scholar takes Pleasure in Play, till he gets a Taste for Knowledge: But when he has got this, it keeps a sure Possession of his Heart, and makes Study much more pleasing to him, than ever Play had been. *My Brethren*, perhaps, this Reasoning may appear to be too abstracted for such a Discourse; but yet the Resolutions we form of renouncing Evil, and embracing Holiness of Life, are much concerned in the Truth of it: For Men are always like to love that most, which most pleases them; this is, Nature, and Nature will still prevail. But now here is the true Way of Reasoning with our selves against Sin, and in Favour of Purity and Vertue.

“ I am sure that, though Vice and forbidden
 “ Enjoyments seem to please, yet vertuous
 “ Habits and holy Enjoyments (upon Sup-
 “ position that they are more excellent) will
 “ please much more. I am sure I have Pow-
 “ ers within me, that, by the Grace of God,
 “ and a sedulous Application, are capable of
 “ being so improved, that I shall attain to a
 “ standing Relish of Pleasures that are holy;
 “ so that it is Demonstration, I may be much
 “ happier in Holiness of Life, than ever I
 “ have

“ have been, or can be, in the Practice of
 “ Evil: I shall be much more pleased. I now
 “ think my self happy; I shall then be really
 “ so: I now imagine I have Pleasure; I shall
 “ then feel that I have. For the Objects of
 “ this rational and pure Felicity, being un-
 “ speakably more excellent than the other; I
 “ am capable of that Sense of Excellency,
 “ which will render them inexpressibly more
 “ pleasing.” And let us rest assured, it is
 but changing the Taste, and we shall have a
 Satisfaction that we never imagined, nor were
 capable of before. And to conclude this Pa-
 ragraph; If the Pleasure Men have in Things
 is proportionable to the Excellency of them,
 as I think it must be; it will follow, that when
 we have got a Relish of Things excellent, they
 will not only give us greater Satisfaction, but
 will bring us quite off from the Pursuit of
 mean Pleasure, and make us negligent of it,
 as what we want no more, as we have done:
 Just as we extinguish a Candle when Day re-
 turns, and lay aside a Chrystal, when we can
 procure a Diamond: And Experience shews us
 that it is so in Fact. He that has got a Taste
 for excellent, for divine Objects, neglects all
 others, and counts them insignificant. *There*
be many who say unto us, Who will shew us
*any Good? But LORD lift thou upon us * the*
Light of thy Countenance. Thou hast made
my Heart more glad, than the Wicked are

* PSALM iv. 6.

when

*when their Corn and their Wine most abound. And again, One * Day in thy Courts is better than a thousand: I had rather be a Door-keeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness.*

III. We come now to the third Thing, *viz.* That Religion is excellent: Not only more so than Irreligion, which is just the Reverse to every Thing worthy; but also that it is more excellent than a State of mere Innocence, without Vertue and Religion; if such a State could be supposed.

First, The Habits and Dispositions of a religious Mind are excellent. Religion fills Mens Minds with God: And the Admiration and Esteem of him, the Love and Devotion of the Soul to him, which fair and unprejudiced Views of his Excellency and Grace cannot but produce, together with an easy and chearful Acquiescence in him as our *Portion*, do greatly enlarge the Mind, and greatly please. These Sentiments and Dispositions are just and reasonable, and they are great and manly, attended with a Delight which is most natural, and therefore solid and permanent. They make a most honourable Choice who devote their best Affections to God. The Dignity of that blessed Object derives a real Worth and Honour upon the Mind that is intimately united to it. And as

* PSALM lxxxiv. 10.

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the Love of God is in it self excellent and pleasing, so it tends to make Men still more like God, and more worthy; as we very certainly learn the Habits, Temper, and Way of Persons with whom we are much conversant, and whom we dearly love. He must have an ingenuous and great Mind, that can in Truth love the divine Being; and that Affection, as it prevails, will make his Mind still more so. In this Love, and in the Delight that attends it, there is nothing superstitious or unnatural, there is nothing mean and narrow; but every Thing just and reasonable, great, and therefore pleasing. It is matchless Worth in the Object, that attracts; and the Image of that upon the Mind that is attracted is true Excellency, and gives solid Satisfaction. I have this only to add, That when God is considered as in CHRIST reconciling a guilty World; when he is considered, as, by the hardest Labours and Sufferings, cutting out a new Way for us to perfect Blessedness; the Love that a serious and good Man bears to him has in it, Admiration of his Grace, and Gratitude, that are most just, and produce the most tender and delicate, as well as great Sentiments. But this is, indeed, a Subject of which one should say a great deal, or nothing at all.

The religious Mind, again, is a *benevolent* One, just, charitable, faithful, and compassionate; and, to crown all, in the Gospel of the blessed JESUS, has learned to forgive an
D Enemy.

Enemy. Every one sees that these Dispositions are excellent. He is counted a Man of Worth, of whom the World cannot say, that ever he did an unjust, or dishonourable Thing; and they see nothing, that do not see a Beauty, in such a Life, which the Treacherous and Unjust have not. But to be good and charitable, is still something greater. This is so taking with Persons that are good Judges of Worth, that a Man would even venture to die for such an one: *Scarcely * for a righteous Man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good Man some would even dare to die.* There is in a selfish Temper (which Religion knows nothing of) something so mean and offensive, and in a good and generous Spirit, something so worthy, that we cannot but admire and esteem the latter, while we hate the former. And that Tenderneſs and Pity, in which Benevolence expreſſes it ſelf towards the Miſerable, and its great Industry in relieving the Poor, in the Defence of the Injured, in aſſiſting the Weak, in comforting thoſe that are caſt down, in the Inſtruction of the Ignorant, and in adviſing the Imprudent, will command Eſteem and Commendation as long as there is ſuch a Thing, as a Senſe of what is commendable, left in the World. But that, which of all the ſocial Vertues is moſt divine, is a Diſpoſition cordially to forgive thoſe that have injured us, and to wiſh them

* ROM. v. 7.

well:

well : This is the Vertue by which the meek and compassionate JESUS would have his Disciples distinguished ; and he practised it himself to Perfection. Upon the whole, there is so much confessed Worth in Benevolence of Temper, that Men, who are Strangers to the Practice of it themselves, admire it in others ; and it will be admired, so long as Men can see and discern moral Beauty ; that is, so long as they have Reason. Now, I say, that the religious Mind is a benevolent One : *The * Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth.*

But, to say something also concerning the more eminent Vertues of private Life, and which do not so directly concern our Behaviour towards others :

Religion gives true Greatness of Mind. There is a *divine Nature* in the Servants of God, and this must be a great one. Religion abhors what is little and mean : There is no Man of a religious Temper, that is of a mean Temper. A Man of a good Spirit hates Evil, because he finds something base and narrow in it, something that is opposite to the Piety of his Mind. The Aims and Prospects of Religion are great and high ; such as eternal Life and Happiness, living for ever in the most honourable and excellent Company, and being employed in Exercises that are important and worthy ; the Possession of what is

* EPH. v. 9.

the most glorious and enriching, and being entertained with what is most pleasing and delightful. There is in a religious Temper a certain Ambition, which cannot be satisfied with any Thing less, than the very greatest Honours, and Happiness, that Reason and Revelation allow us to hope for. And this Ambition of Things that are so great, and yet suitable to us, and really attainable, is true Greatness of Mind. The Labours, again, of a religious Person, his daily religious Labours, tend to what is worthy; *viz.* the Pleasing and Honouring of his Creator, the Improvement of his own Mind in Knowledge and Vertue, the Conquest of himself in every Thing that is disagreeable to the Rules of Reason, and the Practice of Truth, and the Entertaining of himself in Converse with divine Objects: These are excellent Things: They are worthy of the human Mind; and he that spends his Time, and improves his Faculties in this Manner, does surely very much outshine Persons that are taken up with Things mean and insignificant, and must, one would think, have a much more pleasing Enjoyment of Life.

To this we may add a Consideration, that does much illustrate the Greatness of a religious Mind; *viz.* That a good Man's Happiness, his principal Happiness, springs up within him, and he is not dependant upon Things external. There is such a Thing in Religion, as being pleased, without Wealth, without Honour,

Honour, nay, without Health, or Friends: And in this a religious Person bears a Resemblance (be sure, a very faint one) of that glorious Being who has infinite Felicity in himself. CLEMENT of ALEXANDRIA somewhere tells us, That he that wants the least is the most like GOD. We have greater Authorities than this. SOLOMON says, *That a good Man is satisfied from himself.* And our Saviour speaks of a *Heaven within us: And * he that believeth in me, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of living Water. And † the Water that I shall give him, shall be in him a Well of Water springing up into eternal Life.* It is certainly true, that the sweetest Entertainment of a good Man is from within. He enjoys much in the Enjoyment of himself, of his own Faculties and Powers recovered from their original Corruption, and fitted to minister a sincere Joy. He enjoys much more in conversing, by pious Meditation, and Reading, and Prayer, with him that made him; and in the vast Hopes that grow from his Consciousness to Purity and Uprightness. A Man of this Spirit can despise the World; he can live, that is, enjoy himself without its Honours, or Riches, or Pleasures. There is certainly such a Thing, which is the Fruit of this divine Temper, as almost Forgetting that we ail any Thing, or that we want any Thing. And a Person of this Spirit, does indeed appear like a

* JOHN viii. 38.

† JOHN iv. 14.

GOD,

GOD, when compared with those lower and weaker Minds, that scarce know any Delight, but what arises from a perpetual Succession of new Pleasures without them; which may amuse, but can never make them happy: For it is not what we *have*, but what we *are* that makes us so; and there must be true Greatness in that Mind that is pleased from it self. This Character is worthy of being envied. And let those, that think and speak of practical Religion as a mean Thing, and fit only for weaker Minds, know, that they are under a Mistake: They think of it in that Manner, because they do not know it. It would be well if the Scorners that despise it upon that Account, would consider, that it is in the Way of Religion only, that the Ambition of human Nature, which by a wrong Application of it, degenerates into Pride and Vanity, can be satisfied.

To this we may add Firmness of Mind, and Constancy: These are the Vertues of great Minds, but they are also the Vertues of religious Minds. Religion makes a Man true to his Resolutions, steady in his Conduct, and of a Piece with himself. His Temper may be various in other Things, but with Respect to those that are of the greatest Importance, it is uniform. You always know where to find him: He has one great Aim, that he pursues steadily, and to which all others must be subordinate and give Way. And as in
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the general Aim and Design of his Life (for no good Man lives without Design) he is the same; so in those particular Attempts, which are necessary to serve his greater Purpose, Religion will give him a Firmness that nothing else can. Conscience and Faith will bear him up against Difficulties, that might seem to be much too hard for him. And,

In meeting Danger, again, and in bearing Adversity with Patience, Religion discovers something very great, and which exceeds the Powers of Nature without it. The Righteous is bold as a Lion: While he preserves his Integrity and Faith in God, he is prepared chearfully to engage in the most dangerous, if they are necessary, Attempts. It is a known Remark of those that have been used to War and Battles, that the very best Men are the boldest Soldiers: They meet Death in its grimest Appearances with Intrepidity: And so they reasonably may, for they have nothing to fear or apprehend from it. Nor is Religion less conspicuous in supporting Men under Adversity, and in Constancy, and Patience of Evil. It preserves the Mind from sinking, and from desperate Measures. Men of Vertue certainly have a concealed Fountain of Happiness, which external Misfortune does not affect. Amongst other Things, they have pleasing Foretastes of a perfect Felicity in Reserve for them in most faithful Hands, and which will be bestowed on them as soon as they have finished their

their Course upon Earth. They know, also, that the Calamities of the present Life, well improved; will add to their future Portion; and that the greatest Misfortunes of Mortals, are capable of being so *traded* with, that they shall be Productive of immense Gain hereafter. Their Constancy therefore is rational, they act a brave Part, and it is also a wise one. I acknowledge there is a great Variety in Mens natural Tempers, and that Religion will generally appear, with greater or less Lustre, according to the Complexion on which it is grafted: Some are naturally bold, others are timorous; some are firm and steady, others various and uncertain. Religion upon a Mind that is naturally timorous and unconstant, will not make so fair an Appearance, as upon one that is bold and firm. But yet it will carry Nature much farther than ever it could have gone without it. And farther; it is possible to be so strengthened and established by Faith, that the natural Weakness of the Mind shall disappear. And, in this Case, the weakest will be capable of as great Things as the boldest. PETER was once a great Coward, and very ungenerously failed; but it was not long till he was as great a Heroe as PAUL himself. And now that I have mentioned this last, I cannot help adding his noble Speech to a Company of dear Friends, that passionately dissuaded him from going up to JERU-
SALEM;

SALEM: *What * mean ye to weep, and to break my Heart? For I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at JERUSALEM for the Name of the LORD JESUS.* In a Word; He whose Heart is established, trusting in GOD, will not fear *the Face of Man*; will not much dread accidental Evil, nor tremble at the Approaches of Death it self: And so will go easy and composed through the Course of a Life, every Stage of which is beset with Danger and Calamity. He that is capable of this, is a great Man. It is not to be denied, I own, that there are many serious and good Men, that have not so much overcome their Fears: And this shews, that their Religion is defective; but it does not prove that Religion is incapable of producing those Effects that have been now mentioned.

Thirdly, Religion makes Men free: Which is saying, but in other Words, what is not, I think, unsuitable to the Gravity of this Place; *viz.* that it makes them Gentlemen. Liberty is essential to true Greatness and Honour, and every State that is not free, is accounted a mean one. Now, he is certainly free, *that does as he pleases*: And this is really a Privilege which Men enjoy, as the genuine Fruit of Religion. A finished Saint chooses, and cannot but choose, what GOD commands. His Will is compliant with that of GOD, and so he does what he will. And this Compliance is

* ACTS xxi. 13.

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infinitely

infinitely reasonable, and what an enlightened and unprejudiced Mind cannot but choose. It is all Mistake to think it mean and superfluous to live under the Restraints of the divine Law. These Restraints are consistent with true Freedom. They do not bind Men up from what they choose. For the Case, in Reality, is, that they do not choose what would be a Violation of them. This Freedom is an Image of divine Liberty. GOD is infinitely free, yet he cannot do any Thing that is disagreeable to eternal Reason and Truth. So the upright Servants of GOD are free; but the divine Nature they have received, makes every Thing evil disagreeable, and they choose and delight in what is good. It is a Mistake to think, that there is no religious Obedience, but what is a Force and Constraint upon them that yield it. Such Religion would not be pleasing to GOD, nor productive of any good Fruit to us. It is, in Truth, quite otherwise: *The * Law of the Spirit of Life in CHRIST JESUS sets Men free from the Law of Sin and Death.* And † *We are delivered from the Terrours of the Law, that we might be capable of serving GOD in Newness of Spirit.* That renewed Spirit, is a free one; and by its natural Tendencies, and a most cordial Choice, disposes Men to Obedience. It makes them capable of doing that, with Ease and Satisfaction, that no Terrour could have forced

* ROM. viii. 2.

† CHAP. vii. 6.

from them. This new Nature is a Law to them; and while they act under the genuine Influences of it, they obey God, and please him, and at the same Time do what they will. This is the Liberty that the Apostle PAUL rejoiced so much in, and an excellent Liberty it is.

For those Men are free from Bondage to imperious Lusts and Appetites: They have overcome themselves: They live, therefore, calm and composed, and their Minds are not as those of other Men, disturbed by the Storms of Passion and impure Desire, which are fatal to a Man's Peace and Happiness. They breathe a free Air; they live unrestrained and easy. This is an excellent State; and as it suits the Mind of Man, must also greatly please it.

IV. The last Thing I have to mention under this Head, is, That Religion makes Men excellent, as it makes them holy. I take Holiness now in the largest Sense (in which I think it is taken the most frequently in the New Testament) as signifying Purity of Heart and Life. Holiness, as it is a Perfection of the divine Being, signifies his eternal Distance from every Thing that is morally impure and defiling, and his Abhorrence of it: It is the unchangeable Righteousness of his Nature, and his Love to every Thing that is Reason and Truth. Holiness in his Servants, which is his Image, consists in a Freedom from moral Stain

and Pollution, and the Love of what is good and righteous. Now this has an Excellency in it. Indeed Holiness and Excellency (taking this last in the moral Sense) are convertible Terms, and signify the same Thing. There is nothing morally evil, but what is base and mean. And this is not only applicable to all the Sins of the Flesh, but to all the Vices of the Mind. Reason furnishes Men with a Sense, by which they discern this. And were it possible that there were no Law from Heaven, nor any future Judgement, or Punishment of evil Doers; yet these Dispositions and Actions that are immoral, and that stain the Purity of Nature, must be accounted odious : There is a Deformity in them sensible enough. And the Law of Reputation may be considered as a Proof of this, which does approve the Vertuous and Good as reputable, while it pours Contempt upon the Workers of Iniquity. If we take Holiness in the stricter Sense, as signifying the Devotion of a Man's Life, and its being sacred to God ; this may be proved also to have great Worth and Excellency in it. It is the Fruit of the former ; and as it has been considered, while we treated of Love to God, it will not be needful to insist upon it here. To conclude this Head of Discourse : If we could, with unprejudiced Eyes, see Holiness in its native Beauty, and at the same Time all the Deformity of Evil ; we could not but be pleased with the one, and delight in it : We could

could not but hate the other : For the former we should discern to be most excellent, and the latter to be vile. So a Man that is in his Senses, cannot but delight in Apparel that is clean and decent, while he loaths what is nasty and abominable. And who is there that would not rather have a smiling and beautiful Infant in his Bosom, than a poisonous and loathsome Toad ?

We pass now to the Fruits of Religion in the Actions of Life, and these are suitable to the Temper of the Mind that brings them forth. They are excellent. Religion is all Goodness, and Blessedness. It will never leave any Monument of Unfaithfulness, Unjustice, or Cruelty ; but always of Peace, and Goodness, and Love ; Monuments, that shall be to the Glory of God, and the Advantage of Mankind. It will never occasion the Ruin of any Man's Person, Character, or Estate ; it will not oppress any Family, nor lay any Country desolate : These are the unhappy Fruits of Sin. But the Cloathing of the Naked ; the Feeding of the Hungry ; Relieving of the Oppressed ; Reconciling those that are at Variance ; the Advancing of such as are worthy, but neglected ; the Instructing of the Ignorant, and Guiding of the Simple, are the Fruits of Religion, the Works of the Righteous. And as noble are the Fruits of it in private Life, which have been already considered. And these are its common Fruits. But sometimes
Religion

Religion produces what is not only excellent, but amazing. To take Notice of a few Instances of this. One Man goes chearfully and offers his Son in Sacrifice to GOD; his Darling, for whom he had provided a great Estate; from whom thousands were to spring, that should make the Name of ABRAHAM great; and upon whose Life, it seems, he knew, the Salvation of the World depended. Another, while a poor Shepherd, goes to bring the oppressed ISRAELITES out of EGYPT, in Spite of all its Power; and to give into their Possession one of the finest and most populous Countries in the World: He attempted all this without any Probability of Success, from human Reason, or Prospects, and yet succeeds in every Thing. Another, engages an Army that was almost without Number, with three hundred Men, and routs them. A Stripling goes to fight a Giant of prodigious Stature and Strength, and a Man of War, with only a Sling, and a Staff. And three young Men, resisted all the Temptations that could arise from the Prospect of future Advancement, and all the Fears of Suffering under the Lash of an absolute and enraged Tyrant, with equal Constancy, and were actually cast into the fiery Furnace. How bravely do they speak, to the most powerful Man upon Earth? O NEBUCHADNEZZAR *, *we are not careful to answer thee in this Matter; if it be so our*

* DAN. iii. 17.

GOD whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine Hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the golden Image that thou hast set up. And to offer a Cluster of these noble Monuments, of the Excellency and Greatness of Religion together, see what the Apostle has said in the last Part of the 11th to the HEBREWS: And the New Testament Saints have been nothing inferiour to those of the Old. The Christian Religion, especially in the first Ages, has brought forth Fruits, that render human Nature indeed reputable; it has made it exceed it self. And those Fruits have been so abundant and common, that it is with great Reason, that ORIGEN offers this to his Antagonist, as an Argument to prove, that Christianity did greatly excel the so much boasted Philosophy of the World, and that it had something divine in it. I have here, and also above, in discoursing of religious Habits and Dispositions, avoided any Attempt, to prove that there is, in these Dispositions and Actions that have been named, a real Excellency. To labour this Point seems impertinent: Indeed as much so, as it would be to prove, that Jewels glister, or that the Body of the Sun is bright. These Things our Senses tell us, and we need no Argument to demonstrate it. And so moral Excellency is self-evident

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to the mental Eye. Men that give themselves Leave to think, cannot but discern it.

The Rewards of Religion are also excellent. These are that Peace of Conscience, which is the peculiar Entertainment of virtuous and good Men, and all the Pleasure (and an exquisite Pleasure it is) that they have in the Works of Piety and Charity: Which Happiness on Earth, where it is imperfect and interrupted, will be crowned with eternal and perfect Blessedness in Heaven. I shall not labour to describe this; for I have neither Thoughts, nor Words, suitable to it. But one Remark may be made, which will much tend to illustrate the present Argument, and it is this: That by all that we know concerning heavenly Happiness, and the heavenly Life, it is no other than the Perfection of the divine Life: That Life, I mean, of Piety and Vertue, to which Men attain upon Earth. Let me tell a Man what true Christianity is, says the great Mr. Howe (in whom, were there such a Thing as a Transmigration of Souls, we should surely think that we had found the Apostle JOHN) and he will be capable of telling me what Heaven is. And that same Author has often observed, that Heaven is within Men; and, that future, as well as present, Happiness springs up, immediately, from a holy Temper. In Heaven Men see clearly, seeing they cannot but love with the utmost Fervour; and in such everlasting Love, there must

must be everlasting Delight. The Clearness and Rectitude of their Minds, make them *capable* of Felicity in God. And these are their Health, and the immediate Spring of their Happiness. And whatever we may conceive as without them, that shall be an Ingredient in the Happiness of their State; it is nothing when compared with the Perfection of their Minds, as that makes them capable of perfect Love to God; from which returned, by Expressions of infinite Love to them, their Felicity, principally flows. Now upon this we may farther observe, that there is Truth in the old Saying, *viz.* That Vertue is its own Reward. Not that our Religion, or Vertue, in our present State, can render us compleatly blessed. But yet it appears plainly, that the Perfection of Religion, or Vertue, is our Heaven, and our Reward. Could we suppose, that our Minds should be made perfect upon Earth, and that they should here overflow with seraphick Love, as they shall do hereafter; we should have our Heaven here, as well as hereafter. And it is certain, that some Men have got to such advanced Degrees of Religion, that indeed their Heaven has begun before they died. And I may venture to affirm, that a Man must taste something of Heaven here, or he will never see it hereafter: Which is only saying, That a Man must be sincerely religious here. For, it seems,

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sincere

sincere Religion, and the Love of God, have Heaven in them. But do not these Things tend to illustrate the Excellency of Religion? Surely it must be excellent, seeing it makes our Heaven. Thus, you see, Religion is excellent; its Habits, its Fruits in the Actions of Life, and its Rewards are so. My Subject indeed would lead me to compare, with the Excellency and Delights of Religion, all that seems to be excellent, or pleasing, in Irreligion and Vice: But as there is not now Time for this, so I think it is wholly unnecessary. Vice and Impiety are just the Reverse of what I have been describing; and if there be real Excellency in the Latter, there can be none in the Former: On the contrary, they must be mean and worthless.

To conclude. True Religion is true Greatness of Mind: And the divine Life is the most excellent Life: And divine Objects, which are the Nourishment and Delight of it, are called so, to denote their superiour Excellency. And so, according to the Principles laid down in the first Part of this Discourse, true Religion, and divine Objects, must be the most entertaining. And though Prejudices against them may take from the Delight we should have in them, or make us incapable of any Delight in them; yet our Reason is not to be quite subdued by these Prejudices. Our Understandings, if we
listen

listen to them, will tell us, we are wrong; and that we can never have the true and solid Enjoyment of ourselves, till these Prejudices are removed; till we are capable of relishing excellent Things: Then we shall be pleased and happy. And to be firmly persuaded of this, is a very great Attainment, and a necessary one. For all Mankind, the Wise, and the Unwise, desire Happiness. Not to desire that, is absolutely impossible. And if Men did firmly believe, that Religion would make them happy, they would embrace it. And the latent mischievous Cause of their persevering in Evil, is, that they do not believe it. They rather believe, it is a severe and unnatural Thing. But if you have heard the contrary proved, and I hope it will appear to have been proved in this Discourse; believe it: And believe, that Religion will make you great, and therefore happy. Thus we have a fair and substantial Argument, for seeking, first, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof.

Let me earnestly request you to meditate much upon these Things. And, that your Reasonings with your selves may be successful, pray for the Help of that blessed Spirit, *who turns Men from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God.* Whatever our Prejudices against Religion may now be; yet, you see, that if we had a Taste for the

Practice of it, it would make us happy. So that it is our Interest to ask the Grace of God, and to surrender our selves to the regenerating Powers of his Spirit. And when we can do this heartily, we have got a great Way. It is no small Attainment, to be able to seek the Grace of God in Sincerity. I believe there are not a few, that find Difficulty in this; or, if they attended to the Meaning of what they said, would find Difficulty, in praying for the Help of the Spirit, and for heavenly Influence. For many do not care for these Favours. They rather have an Aversion against them; which arises from their imagining, that they should be deprived of what they like; and that, by having their Minds led Heaven-ward, and into a Course of serious Religion, they should be rendered uneasy, and unhappy. But, surely, my Brethren, if you believe what has been here said, you cannot entertain any such Apprehensions. Plainly, all that we want to make us blessed, is, a Change of Inclination: And when that is obtained, we shall become indifferent, indeed, to many Things we now admire; and many Things, that, perhaps, are now pleasing, shall be hated. But Things unspeakably more excellent shall come in their Room, to engage our Affections, and be the Entertainment of our Lives. Let us never forget, that Religion is excellent; that no-
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thing is Religion, but what is so; and that in a religious Course of Life, we shall differ from our selves in a bad one, only by being greater, and happier, and by our having nobler Sentiments, and a more manly Entertainment.



S E R-



S E R M O N II.

PROV. XII. 28.

In the Way of Righteousness is Life, and in the Path-way thereof there is no Death.



O S T of these sententious Sayings are, as to the Sense and Meaning of them, independent of one another ; and so we are not here to look for any Connexion of the Words. *In the Way of Righteousness* ; that is, in the Practice of Piety and Vertue : For, I think, the Term *Righteousness* is to be taken in the largest Sense, as including the Whole of Religion. *Is Life* ; the noblest Enjoyment of Life, the most solid Pleasure and Gain, and it will issue in Life eternal. And this Proposition, according to the usual Way of this Writer, is confirmed by a Negative, strongly expressing the same Thing : *In the Path-way thereof there is no Death*. If we take this Clause in the literal Sense of it, it must be understood

derstood to signify, that though the Righteous die, they do not die as other Men. Righteousness untings Death to them, and makes it the Gate to Life, and they are the Heirs of a blessed Immortality. But, perhaps, we are to take Death here in an improper Sense, for great Evil and Misery: And this is a Way of Speaking very much used, and it is not unfrequent in the holy Scriptures.

And so the Sense is, that Righteousness yields the most solid Satisfaction, and gives the truest Enjoyment of Life. That it is perfectly free from every Thing woeful and miserable, and from all Tendency to Ruin, here, or hereafter. I shall not need to tell you, that a righteous Life may be an afflicted one, loaded with great Calamities, and harrassed with many Temptations. But, surely, these are not the genuine Fruits of Righteousness, or its necessary Attendants: They arise plainly from other, and very different Causes, the Devil, the World, and the Imperfection of our present State. Indeed this last, may be well accounted the sole original Cause, as it is that without which the other would make no Impression upon us, could produce no such Effects. And if we must trace Temptations and Difficulties to the Imperfection of our Natures, especially to the moral Imperfection of them, the Defects of our Righteousness; we must not ascribe them to Righteousness it self, the Perfection of which would,

would, and in due Time will, be an effectual Cure of all such Distempers. And farther; the Afflictions of a righteous Life ought not to be alledged against the Truth of SOLOMON's Assertion; because prevailing Piety will make even a most distressed Life tolerable; I may venture to say, easy. It will take the Venom out of all its Calamities; and it is not impossible, even in our present State, to attain to such a Degree, that we shall be above Complaint.

Now, my Design, in treating this Subject, is to recommend Vertue and Piety, here called Righteousness, as natural and pleasing; as what tends to make our present Lives easy, and happy, as well as our future State. To this Purpose I would endeavour to shew what it really is; and that every Image and Representation of it that is frightful and unnatural, is a very unfair one.

The Generality of Men, when they are called upon, and exhorted to turn from a sinful Course, to strict Holiness of Life, seem immediately to be in Confusion: Their very Hearts rise against it. They seem to think of Religion, as of something wondrous severe, and that will undoe them. When they hear of the spotless and unchangeable Holiness of the divine Being, they are much alarmed: They can hardly bear the Thought. Much less can they think, with any Satisfaction, of becoming conformable to him in their Dispositions

fitions and Actions, or of living with him. They consider such a State, if the Truth were known, not at all as a happy one, but as very painful and wretched. And one great Mistake that, I believe, is commonly made here, is this: When Men hear the Terrours of God displayed, they work these into the Character of the Being they are exhorted to love and trust in; without considering, that these Terrours are supposed to be quelled by unlimited Mercy to the Penitent; and that the sincere Conversion of the Soul to God disarms him of them, as far as they are concerned. And so they frame to themselves Idea's of the divine Being, which render it indeed impossible that they should love him. No Wonder, that these Men should be afraid of a spiritual Life; and of living eternally with God, which is, and always ought to be, considered as the principal Happiness of it. Again, when they hear that God requires of them; not only a cordial Love, but an ardent Zeal for his Glory; a perfect Acquiescence in him, as their Portion; an unreserved Submission to his Will, and to all the Steps of his holy Providence: And when they hear of the vast Attainments of some Persons, and of their great Progress in such Obedience; it is to them all over romantick, it appears impossible. The very Entrance into such a Way of Life, requires so much, and is so terrible, that they cannot see what they are to do, but go on

as they are, without making any Attempt to give themselves wholly to God. And the severe Practice of Piety seems to them so unnatural, and against the Grain, that they have no Heart to resolve it, no Hand to attempt it.

Perhaps some good and serious Persons, may also suffer, by unfair and superstitious Apprehensions of religious Obedience, which *even they*, still retain. They are found, sometimes, unjustly afraid of God, and have Thoughts concerning him, that are very injurious to his Honour. They regard almost every Thing in Religion with an Awe and Fear that is more than reasonable, and degenerates into Superstition. Perhaps they do not know how to allow themselves, even in Things that are plainly lawful, and frame Idea's of what they ought to be, most strangely out of the Way. And they do often greatly err in representing Religion to others, as what has a dreadful Aspect. Their Manner of speaking concerning it, as well as the Things they say, and their very Gestures, are enough to scare Men, and to make them believe, that Holiness of Life is something very gloomy indeed.

It may, perhaps, be of some Service to Men, in either of these Cases mentioned, to shew them what practical Religion really is; and to set it before them in a fair and just Light, free from every Thing that is superstitious, which must be also unpleasing. Now the plainest Definition of it, that I can give you,

you, is, That it consists in our Acting in all Relations of Life according to Reason. It is nothing in the World, but a wise and rational Conduct. The Practice of Reason and Truth. What is Holiness, but the Conformity of our Dispositions and Actions to eternal Reason? This is plainly an unchangeable Thing. The divine Being is immutably conformed to it, or rather, is eternal Reason and Truth. This is the glorious moral Perfection of his Nature; the perfect Holiness of it. And his Will is, therefore, to us, the Standard of what is right, and what is wrong; what is holy, and what is otherwise: That is, of what is fit and reasonable, and what is not so. And the Conformity of our Lives to God, or, in other Words, the Holiness of them, is really the Conformity of them to Reason and Truth. This is the Whole of that Religion, of that Holiness, that appears to some Men so unnatural and frightful. Let no one think, that in saying so, I am debasing Religion, or misrepresenting it; for it will appear otherwise by and bye. In the mean Time, the Manner in which the wise Man speaks of Holiness and Religion in this Book, and the Representations he every where gives of them, countenance what has been now said. He generally calls Vertue and Piety, by the Name of Wisdom; and Impiety and Wickedness, by that of Folly. Is not this plainly saying, That to act piously and vertuously, is to act a wise and rational

Part? And that to do wickedly, is unreasonable, and foolish. To say it in one Word, That Religion is true Wisdom, and good Sense, and that Irreligion is Weakness and Folly.

What do we think was the Religion of ADAM in an innocent State? Was it any Thing, but to act agreeably to right Reason, and to the Light of his own Mind, that is, to the Law of Nature? And this is the Essence of Religion still; though some Actings of the Mind, and some external Actions, in which it is to be expressed, are, and must be, in many Instances, very different, from what they then were. We are now fallen from GOD, and restored to his Favour by a Mediator; who died for us, that he might procure the Forgiveness of our Sins, and our Acceptance with GOD. Sincere Religion, therefore, in this State of Things, must shew it self, in an ingenuous Contrition of Soul for our Sins; an humble Submission and Gratitude to the Redeemer, and a Dependence upon his Merit: In holy Resolutions and Endeavours to amend our Lives, and in a religious Submission to the Ordinances which CHRIST has instituted in his House. Our Religion, in the present State of Mankind, must discover it self in such Things as these; which in an innocent State there could be no Thought of, no Obligation to. But Religion, as it signifies the Piety and Rectitude of our Dispositions, and
Lives,

Lives, is in its Nature the same now, that it was then. The Doing of what is reasonable, and fit, to be done in the various Relations of Life, is the very Being of it. And the Gospel, and Religion of Christians therein revealed, is no other than the Law of right Reason; with an Addition of the special Duties which we owe to our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who is, by divine Appointment, our Saviour and Sovereign.

But to illustrate this Argument more particularly, let us consider the Relations of Life, in which we are placed; and what it is, that our holy Religion requires of us in every of them: That we may see whether it demands any Thing but what right Reason and plain Sense approves; whether it be any Thing but the Perfection of Reason; and whether there is any Thing in it unnatural. To proceed then. We are here the Creatures of a great and good God, who is our common Parent: We are capable of discerning and doing Right or Wrong, of Happiness, and of Misery: We are formed for Society together, and for an eternal Duration of Existence. This short Account of our State, will lead us to a View of all the Duties in which the Practice of Religion consists: Those only excepted, which we owe to our faithful Redeemer, which shall likewise be considered in their Place.

We are the Creatures of a great and good God, There is but One, and he is the Origin

gin of all created Being. He made us, and sustains us. He has furnished us not only with the necessary Supports of Life, but with the Delights of it. He has declared his Intention of sustaining us for ever, and of making us eternally happy. Now while we consider this Greatness and Goodness of our common Father, Reason directs us to admire, and esteem, and love him above all; to be ever thankful to him, to be perfectly submissive and resigned to his Will, howsoever made known to us. And, in fine, to put our Trust in him, with a firm and easy Reliance upon his Faithfulness and Grace; and to account ourselves very happy in the Hands and Possession of such a Proprietor. And I cannot think of any Thing in Religion, that is in the Branch we are now considering, which is Piety towards God, but what is comprehended in this, or follows from it. And this of our Duty towards God, I would most insist upon, as being the principal Thing. Let us, therefore, take it to Pieces, and see if it is not natural and reasonable.

There is but one God, and he is the Origin of created Being; and he is infinitely wise, and good, righteous, and faithful, and of infinite Power. He has given us Existence, not that he needed us, but that he might be glorified in communicating Happiness to us. Now, had we but Minds large enough, what a glorious Being is this? Worthy, be sure, of the
utmost

utmost Admiration and Esteem. Let us consider him, abstracting, from the Relation in which he stands to us; and as if we had no Dependance upon him. Do not infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power, demand the profoundest Veneration and Esteem? A Man must have a strange Cast of Understanding, that can meditate upon such Perfection, without admiring and adoring it. *My Brethren*, do we know a Man among us, of great Sense, and Worth, and do we not pay him, or, at least, do we not owe him, great Respect; though we are not related to him, and have no Dependance upon him? But supposing, now, all the Worth and good Qualities that shine in different Characters, were united in one; and that Person perfectly free from every Thing disagreeable, from every Imperfection of human Nature: Would we not admire and love him, think our selves honoured and happy in his Company, depend much on his Advice and Counsel; and would not every one that neglected, much more that despised and detracted from him, be himself accounted worthless? Yes, surely. But to go a Step farther. Supposing angelical Power and Wisdom, were found in Conjunction with all the Mildness and Tenderness of Man, and this Character adorned also with spotless Innocence; must not every Man of Sense, that knew him, be full of his Love and Praises? Would he not most justly expect universal Esteem?

Esteem? And would not the World flock to see the blessed Countenance, and hear the divine Speeches of such a worthy and amiable Creature? But even this is nothing, when compared with Divinity it self. The purest Sanctities of Heaven are unspeakably inferiour to God. He is infinitely wise, and powerful, and good. But here our Thoughts lose themselves. We are got beyond our Depth. And only know, that it is infinitely absurd, not to love what is infinitely amiable; even suppose we stood in no such Relation to him as his Off-spring. But when we consider this adorably excellent Being, as our Creator and our God, our Father and our Friend: O how stupid it is, not to burn with Love to him! What! Shall we esteem any Thing like him? Shall not he possess and rule in our Affections, who deserves the Throne there infinitely? He deserves it on Account of the Dignity of his Nature; and there is an additional Obligation arising from his Relation to us.

My Brethren; If we have any Dislike of him, is there not some Reason or other to be given for it? Or, is it purely Whim, and without Reason? Let us then consider, what there is, or if there is any Thing, in the divine Being, that can be Matter of Disgust to us. What is God? Why, the infinitely excellent Fountain of Being, and my Father, says every one. Can we then dislike him because he is omnipotent? That is, in other Words,

Words, Are we disgusted, because infinite Power is on our Side, to make our State eternally safe and happy? Had not God infinite Power, Alas! how could he be a God to us? Or can we dislike him, because he has infinite Wisdom; an immense Understanding, to conceive the noblest Purposes, and infallible Measures for the Execution of them? Are we chagreened, because his Eye is always upon us; and that every Turn in our Lives, every Circumstance in our Affairs, has a Place in his Regard? Do not these Perfections render him worthy, and are they not absolutely necessary in our God? What could he be to us, what could he do for us, without them? What is it then that displeases us? Is it, that God is holy, and that it is impossible for him to do Evil, or to approve it? Is it because he is unchangeably faithful and true? Does not this recommend him to our best Affections? What could we expect from a God unrighteous, or unfaithful? Could we be sure of Happiness from him? Could we be sure of any Thing? Does not the very Supposition that there should be Unrighteousness with God, introduce an universal Gloom, and sap all the Foundations of our Hope?

But must it be asked in the next Place, Do we dislike him, because he loves us? Because he has made and redeemed us? Because he has been so kind a Benefactor in the past Stages of Life; and will do much more for

us hereafter? Because he will be an eternal Friend? Can it be possible that we are got to such a Pitch of Ingratitude and Absurdity? Far be it from us. Or do we dislike him because his Greatness and Majesty is infinite? Because he dwells in a glorious Heaven, to which, in good Time, he will advance his Servants? No, surely. Well, then, if there be nothing in Divinity, that is Matter of Disgust to us, why should we have any Aversions against God? Why should we not love him? What! Shall we treat our Creator more hardly, and unjustly, than we would allow our selves to treat any Creature upon Earth, in refusing to esteem what is every Way worthy, and love what is every Way amiable? Is it our Creator only, that must be thus unrighteously treated? Ah! Why do we not love him? Has he not all the possible Perfection of Being? Has he not more than conceivable Kindness for us? Again; let us ask our own Hearts, Whether the Love of God prevailing in us will do us any Harm. We have seen it is not unreasonable, let us now see, whether it will be hurtful? Will it take any Thing from us? Will it be a Thorn in our Sides, that we are so very jealous of it? *My Brethren*; Is it not pleasant to love? And will not the Pleasure there is in Love, be in Proportion to the Dignity of the Object beloved? And will not the Love of God then be infinitely pleasing? Will it not, when perfect, cast out all Fear,
and

and Anxiety? Will it not save us from a thousand internal Pains? And will it not greatly elevate our Souls? Will it not prevent our idolizing the precarious Comforts of mortal Life, while it does not prevent our enjoying of any one of them? And, Lastly; Will it not be well returned in divine Affection, in the very noblest Kindness? So that it will prove infinitely gainful. It is Shame indeed, that there should be a Necessity of pleading the Cause of God in this Manner, in the Christian World: But, be it never so scandalous, the Necessity is plain, while there is one among us that doth not love God at all, or one that doth not love enough. You see, then, that, as far as Religion consists in the Love of God, there is nothing in it more, than what plain Reason, and pure Nature, teach.

But then I observed farther: That considering God as the Donor of Being it self, and as a God of infinite Wisdom and Goodness; Reason will tell us, that we ought to be heartily thankful, and perfectly resigned to him; and that it is fit, we should submit to his Will and Commands, howsoever made known. Now, is there any Thing unnatural, or frightful, in all this? What! will it be difficult, or painful, to preserve upon our Minds a grateful Sense of his infinite Kindness? Will it be Uneasiness to praise him? Or doth it chagreen and frighten us, that we are to be submissive and obedient to his Will, howsoever made known, by

the Light of Nature, or Revelation from Heaven? Ay, here is the Business. Methinks, I hear the unholy Mind whispering: "This is
 " an hard Task indeed. I do not know how
 " to submit to it. His Laws are severe; they
 " enjoin me Temperance and Devotion in the
 " most exact Degree. They oblige me to re-
 " nounce my strongest and most natural In-
 " clinations. They forbid any Thing that fa-
 " vours of Evil to enter so much as into my
 " Thoughts. They bind me to give up my
 " Interest in this Life; and to take my Lot
 " in a World unseen. And then, to submit
 " to every Thing in Providence, without mur-
 " muring. To take all well, and bless God
 " at all Times: It is the hardest Task in the
 " World." Now here, perhaps, the Matter
 sticks, and therefore I shall the more largely
 insist upon it. And,

First of all observe, that it has been already
 proved reasonable and natural to love God;
 and there can be nothing said against that,
 which is not loaded with the very greatest
 Absurdity. But it is very certain, that the
 Love of God will make Obedience to all these
 Laws, which we are apt to account so severe,
 not only easy, but delightful. And so, if we
 can bring our selves to what is confessedly
 reasonable, we shall find no Pain in doing the
 Rest of our Duty.

Secondly, Perfection in our Obedience to
 the divine Commands, is not in our present
 State

State the Condition of our Acceptance with the great King of *Zion*, our Judge ; but Sincerity. And the frightful Rigour of the Law, is done away by the Clemency of the Gospel.

Thirdly, Observe, that nothing in this Exception does contradict the Proposition that was laid down in the Beginning of this Discourse ; namely, that the Laws of Religion bind us to nothing but what eternal Reason and the Nature of Things dictates. As for Abstinence from Evil, and the Renouncing of unlawful Lusts, it is a Thing absolutely necessary to the Happiness of the rational Nature. We may bid a fair Defiance to any Body, to be happy, that gives himself a Licence in Wickedness. It is impossible. The Happiness of intellectual Nature, is a pure, chaste, and sacred Thing, springing up within us, from the Rectitude of our Minds, and not dependent upon external Objects. And seeing it is impossible to be happy, without Renouncing unlawful Lusts, the Question comes just to this : Whether the divine Laws are not perfectly reasonable, in forbidding what is absolutely inconsistent with the Felicity of our Natures ? Whether shall we indulge ourselves in Evil, and be miserable ; or overcome the Tendencies of corrupt Principles and Dispositions, and be happy ? Let us not accuse the divine Law of unreasonable Severity, but consider, that the Nature of Things is a Law to us ; and that God forbids Evil on purpose
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to make us, by that Abstinence, capable of Happiness. And the same may be said concerning the Necessity of what is very properly, in Scripture, termed *Mortification*. The setting of one's Heart upon any Delights of the Flesh, though innocent, is really as fatal in its Consequences, as the particular Actions of Life that are plainly unlawful. For this Reason, our Saviour tells us, That if we hate not Father and Mother, Wife and Children, and every Thing else; that is, if our Love to more sublime Objects, and that are more suited to the intellectual Nature, is not greater than our Love to any temporal Gratification; if we do not heartily abhor this, when it tends to engross our Affections, and take them off from better Things, we cannot be his Disciples, we cannot be Christians, we cannot be happy. And there is infinite Reason for this: For if we delight only in what is external, what is sensual, we shall lose our Taste for the Pleasures of the Mind, and so cannot be happy. Our Delight will be dependant upon a thousand Contingencies; and in its own Nature is too mean to satisfy the Desires of our Minds, and yield a Felicity, in which we can rationally acquiesce, as suitable, and enough for us. And if this is the Law of Reason, and that necessarily arises from the Nature of Things, is it not strangely absurd, to contend against it, as if, by thwarting Reason, we could bend it to our Fancy;

as if, by disputing against the Nature of Things, we could alter it? We know that the Beings above us are happier than we; and we know that God is infinitely, and unchangeably so, without any Dependence upon Sense: And so, were there no Law at all binding us, a wise Man would, in this Instance, be a Law unto himself, in choosing a Felicity that is specifically the same with that of these superiour Beings, that look down upon every Thing gross and carnal with great Disdain. And again, with Respect to our Submission to the various Steps of divine Providence; Does not plain Sense teach us to commit to an infinitely wise and good Being, the Management of our Affairs, and the appointing and determining of our Lot? Does not Reason teach us, that, as God *will be* the universal Sovereign, *he ought* to be so, and that all Things should be as he would have them? And do not we know, that his Will is, and ought to be, unchangeable? Doth not Reason then teach us tamely to submit to it; not only because every Thing must be as God will have it, but also because it is best it should be so? Is there any Harm in our Submission? Can we gain any Thing by a reluctant Temper? Will we lose any Thing by a meek Resignation? Will not this greatly sweeten our Lot? Is there not a great Beauty and Decency in it? And would not a wise Man choose it, though it were not an Article

cle in the Covenant between God and us? Much more might be said upon this Head, but these Hints will lead your Thoughts to many Things of the same Kind, that may give full Satisfaction.

Fourthly, If we should submit to God's holy Will in a most exact Abstinence from the Things he has forbidden, and in doing what he has commanded, and in committing ourselves to his Providence, what Harm will it do us? What Injury shall we sustain by it? Why are we afraid of *striking Hands with him*? Supposing we should make this great Step, are we to be miserable for ever after? What, do we regard it as the Throwing ourselves from a Precipice, or Plunging into the Ocean? What, in Reality, shall we lose by obeying God? We may indeed be cut off from a great many wild and extravagant Things that gratify irregular Appetite and Desire: But shall we be deprived of any innocent Pleasure? Will religious Restraint, do any Thing but keep us in a State in which we shall have the most solid Joy, and be free from Pain? What if we must not be intemperate, or unclean, unjust, or unfaithful, idle in our Thoughts, or Language, will this be our Ruin? Shall we ever lose any Thing by it? Shall we lose Health, Estate, or Reputation among Men of Worth, or shall we suffer in the Repose of our Minds? No, certainly: Vertue and Religion will be the best Security

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Should

Should we not go smoothly and happily on? Why, then, it seems, we are frightened at a mere Shadow; for the whole of this Business consists in a Change of Inclination and Taste, of which we are certainly capable, and in which there is, perhaps, much less Pain than we imagine. Do we not know, that human Nature is changeable? We like a Thing to Day, and are displeased with it the next. We admire our Rattles, when we are Infants; in Childhood, we neglect and slight them. The Pleasures of Childhood, become insipid at one and twenty: And the Delights of Youth sink in our Esteem, as we approach to old Age. Now, should our Taste change; should we love God, and Holiness, and Heaven, as much as ever we have done the World, and the Flesh; would we not go on to Heaven with Ease? Again, are there not some Sins, which we abhor, and which it would be Punishment for us to commit; and can we not, with the utmost Ease and Satisfaction, abstain from these? Now, what if our Inclinations to all Sins, even to what is most our Favourite, should be changed into Abhorrence of them, should we not then be perfectly pleased, and happy without them? Or, if our Inclination is not changed into an utter Abhorrence; yet, if it was so mortified, that our Abstinence from Evil gave us no great Pain, or Trouble, should we not then enjoy our selves in religious Obedience, with Delight?

Delight? Yes, surely. Well; will this Change of Taste and Inclination hurt us? Or, will it be our Ruin? No: It will make us Men; it will make us Saints; it will make us happy: It will be attended with such Composure and Serenity, as will make the Temper of our Minds a Paradise. When we have tried it, we shall find, that the Tyranny of Sin was infinitely cruel, and that the religious Yoke is infinitely easy and delightful. Well, then, let us not be afraid of what is pleasing, and so fit for us; let us not frighten our selves from Happiness. Let not silly carnal Desire keep us in Chains, when we know we are capable of bursting these Chains, and shall have a Joy in our Liberty, infinitely greater, than any Thing we could taste, or, indeed, conceive of, in a State of such mean Servitude.

But how shall this be effected? How shall my Taste be changed? I answer: Holy Habits, and Dispositions, are in themselves exceedingly natural, and pleasing. And there is a moral Sense in us, that makes us capable of relishing the Pleasures of them: And, though that may be much weakened, as having been long oppressed by prevailing Flesh; no sooner shall Men set themselves to religious Obedience in good Earnest, but this oppressed Principle will begin to revive, and exert it self. The suitable and natural Entertainment it then meets with, will give it new Strength and Life: And so, by little and little, as it prevails,

evil Inclinations will grow weak, and forbidden Practices will become less delightful. On the other Hand, Holiness and Vertue will become pleasing. There is, in every one of us, such a moral Sense; there is in every one of us a Conscience, that will thus exert its Power. But we may also expect heavenly Aid; a divine Influence, sweetly attracting; and, if insensibly, yet, very effectually, forming the Mind for the Love of God, and Holiness of Life. And now we are come to our great Strength, which is the Spirit of God; *the Spirit of Faith, of Love, and of a sound Mind, that turns Men from Darkness to Light, from the Power of Satan to God.* This divine Agent is ready at our earnest Call to help us, and his renewing and regenerating Powers applied to the Mind, will restore us to our selves; will compose our turbulent and disquieting Passions, give us a Taste for holy Pleasure, and prepare us for a most comfortable Acquiescence in the Practice of Religion, and the promised Rewards of it. And, when, under the Influence of this divine Power, we have attained to a standing Relish for sacred Delight; and feel our selves happy in it, and perceive that we have got what is infinitely nobler, than that from which we parted, our old Inclinations will very much die. We shall not desire to return to the old Traces of Thought and Action, if we find in our present State what is much more excellent
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and pleasing. Now, what is there in all this that is frightful? It is only our being delivered from Distraction; it is but the composing of our Minds to profound Peace and Tranquillity; it is but preparing us for thinking, and acting, like Men. By this Time, I hope, it appears, that the strictest Laws of Religion bind us to nothing but what is both natural and reasonable; and that it is an abused, and deluded, Imagination that represents Things otherwise.

Here I might add, That we are in the whole Course of our Obedience earning a glorious and eternal State of future Happiness. And, that he must be weak and cowardly indeed, who will not engage in a Struggle with himself, when he hath so fair a Venture for an eternal Crown. But this is obvious, and needs not to be insisted on.

Lastly, It should be deeply considered, that the religious Services we perform, ought to be performed with sincere Dispositions to please and glorify our Creator. This is, every where in Scripture, declared necessary to the Acceptance of them. And it is infinitely reasonable, that the divine Being, whose Property we are, should be glorified in us; and that, in religious Obedience, we should serve him with the utmost Simplicity of Intention. Is he not worthy, that requires this, not only on Account of the Dignity of his Nature, but of his unconceivable Kindness to us? And as
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it is infinitely unrighteous to decline any Service to our GOD that we are capable of; so to act as if we meant to impose upon him, to profess we serve him, when we do not, has something in it base and ungenerous beyond Expression. And what can be a reasonable Motive, to treat our eternal Friend, and Benefactor, and LORD, in such a Manner? Is there not a much greater Pleasure in serving GOD with Sincerity, than in hypocritical Professions, which are a constant Lie to him? Will it not yield a most solid Peace, and a most entertaining Hope, of which the Deceiver is not capable? Is he not the happiest Man, who is the most pleased with himself? And will not a Consciousness to Simplicity and Integrity of Heart make a Man so? Again, Shall we be any Losers by carrying sincere Intentions with us into our religious Obedience? He that preaches the Truth, will it make him a Sufferer that he preaches it with Piety of Aim? He that prays to GOD, will it hurt him to pray sincerely? Will it make a Man any Thing the poorer, to give his Alms with an honest and charitable Design? Can there be any Thing more ridiculous, and a more melancholy Indication of One's wanting good Sense, than the Performance of our external Duty, Duty of the most important Kind; while a disingenuous Temper renders the whole of it insignificant and nauseous? What Character upon Earth can be more despised and hated, than

than that of a perfidious Diffempler? And what is it that can be so mean and dishonourable? And can we contentedly bear the Thought, that our GOD should find us, what we would rather die, than have the World account us? It is to be considered, also, that as religious Services (if these can be called so) that are unsincere, are abominable to the divine Being; so to us also they are wholly lost, for they cannot at all answer the End: Which is, the purifying our Minds, and forming them into a religious Temper; making us acquainted and familiar with God, and giving us a Relish for the Pleasures and Blessedness of a heavenly State: This End cannot be answered by negligent, much less, by hypocritical Devotions. And as good, or, perhaps, better, we should never tread the Floor of a Church, or bow our Knees to God; than that this should be done in continual Diffimulation, which is a provoking Affront to our Creator, and a mischievous Trifling with our selves. What the Resentments of the divine Being against Hypocrisy are, and what Punishments await the Guilty, might be very profitably under this Head considered. But it is chiefly to my present Purpose, to shew, that Hypocrisy is contrary to all good Sense; and that it betrays a Weakness and Meanness of Spirit, that a Person, who has any Sentiments of true Honour, must needs abhor.

Again,

Again, when we consider the Perfections of God, and the Relation in which he stands to us; Reason will teach us, to trust him absolutely with our selves, and all our Concernments. This is a principal Part of our Homage to him as Creatures, and so plainly reasonable, that one would wonder, if a Man, that can think, should be unwilling to do it. Sure, no Man can think it unreasonable, to trust infinite Wisdom in Conjunction with infinite Goodness and Power, without Reserve. Can we be in safer Hands? Is not infinite Goodness a substantial Security to us, that God will do us no Harm? And infinite Wisdom that he will not direct us wrong? Is not Omnipotence the most desirable Helper? Besides, are we not absolutely in God's Power? Has he not made us, and has he not both Strength and Right, to order and dispose of us as he pleases? And can any Thing be weaker, or more whimsical, than to act as if we meant to get out of the Hands in which we must necessarily be? To be shy of trusting a God in whom we live, and move, and have our Being? We must be in his Power, and cannot but be so; and yet think, it is a Venture to trust him! Let us be ashamed of a Thought that cannot be more impious than it is silly, nor more unworthy of Christians, than it is of reasonable Creatures.

To speak a little upon that which is the most awful Step of the divine Providence towards

wards us. We know that God will quickly call us out of this World, from our Business, our Friends, our Lives, into a World we never saw, and of which we know but very little. And what if he does? Is he not the same in that World that he is in this? Cannot he find a proper State, suitable Business, and Entertainment for us? He has made this World, indeed, very beautiful, and has filled it with a vast Variety of delightful Objects. But he did not act here to the *Ultimum posse*, there are much better Worlds into which, after Death, we go. And he that gave what makes Life so pleasing here, will, no Doubt, give Things that are much more desirable hereafter. What if our Bodies go down to the Grave? In very Deed, in the present State of Things that is the safest and best Post for them. Neither Storm nor Tempest, Hunger nor Cold, Gout or Stone, will there give us any Uneasiness, and all the Seeds of complexional Evil will die. When we consider all this, can we think it is Hazard to die? Blessed be God, we are to leave the Body; for we plainly see, there must be another Edition of human Nature, before it comes to any Thing perfect. But if we are reluctant against Death, and a separate State, will that be of any Service to us? Will it keep Death off one Moment? Will our Struggling alter the Course of Nature, or the unchangeable Appointments of Heaven? No: Down to the Grave we must go. And, surely,

no wise Man will set himself to contend with an irresistible Fate. Just so we might pretend to stop the ebbing, or flowing, Sea, the Course of a Tempest, or Things of that Sort; which would evidently discover a great Distraction of Mind, but could not serve any other Purpose.

So much for the Religion of Nature. And, as has been said, the Religion of Christians is the same, with the Addition of the Duties that we owe to the great Mediator, between God and us. These are Faith in him, and a Submission to the Institutions and Ordinances of the Gospel. Here I shall not attempt to offer a full Account of Christianity, or of the Evidences, by which it is proved to be of divine Institution and Appointment. It is enough to the present Purpose, to observe, That it is a Scheme not at all unworthy of God; and that there is nothing in it, unreasonable, or that can be just Matter of Disgust to us. Mankind had offended God, and were obnoxious to him; and it has pleased him to do Right to the Honour of his Justice, by sending his Son in Flesh to suffer for us. It has pleased him in infinite Mercy, thus to repair the Injury, that the Transgression of his Creatures had done to his Laws and Government. And is there any Thing in this that can displease? Does it not rather fill our Minds with the tenderest Sentiments of Gratitude? And with most ingenu-
ous

ous Resolutions to obey? Can we be disgusted; that GOD has contrived such a Method of vindicating his own Honour, and of making our Salvation possible? Are we displeased, that, when we were ruined and undone, he has recovered us to most comfortable Hopes? That he has done this in a Manner so astonishingly gracious, that he has done it wholly at his own Expence? Is it an Offence, that he has done such Honour to human Nature, by his appearing in Flesh? That he has assumed Flesh to serve a Purpose so divine as that of our Salvation? In this Light he is, indeed, infinitely amiable, and spoke what was like himself, when he said: *And * I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all Men unto me.* A Man, if he will but think, must needs adore and submit to a crucified Saviour. And, ah! with what easy Minds we may trust in him. He that died for us, what will he not do for us? And he that arose again from the Dead, what can he not do for us? He that has the Power and Wisdom of a GOD, as well as the Clemency and Bowels of a Man, is fit to be our Saviour, and our Friend. In this Contrivance, for our Redemption, there is infinite Wisdom, and infinite Goodness. All the GOD is here disclosed. And seeing we have such a Redeemer, can we be unwilling to submit to, and trust in him? Would we rob him of the Honour he has so dearly bought? Are

* JOHN xii. 32.

we loth to be received into Heaven, as the everlasting Monuments of his Kindness? Who would not desire to give the Captain of Salvation all imaginable Honour? Who but must delight in doing any Thing, that may contribute to the Glory of his Crown? Can it be unreasonable, or is it painful, to confess his Name, and triumph in his Cross? Can we be unwilling to record his Love in the very greatest Solemnities, and to make the most publick Professions and Vows of Loyalty to him? Is it not reasonable, that he should govern those, whom his Blood has redeemed? Is it not fit he should possess our best Affections, to whom we owe our Hopes of Salvation? Is it not comfortable, that our offended Creator has given us intirely into the Redeemer's Hands, and that we are now to transact with, to depend upon, and to be judged by a God in Flesh? He will overlook our Failings, and accept of our sincere Intentions. He has furnished Heaven for us, and will prepare us for Heaven. He will treat us as his Friends and Kindred. He will make all the necessary Provision for us, and give us a safe Conduct through this World, and crown us with everlasting Blessedness in the next. And thus I have given you a general View of our Religion as Men and Christians, so far as the principal Branch of it, *viz.* Piety towards God, is concerned. And what is there in it unnatural, what that is like

like to fit uneasy upon us? Why should we be shy of such a Religion? Will it prove an Enemy to our Peace? Will it sour, or spoil, our Enjoyment of Life? Will it abridge our Comforts? Will it frustrate any worthy Design? Will it expose us here, or make us unhappy hereafter? What are we afraid of? Just nothing? Let us then resolve to act as thinking Creatures, as Men; and then, surely, we shall act as good Men.

Now, the other Relation of Life, in which we are placed as Members of Society, comes to be considered: But so much has been said upon the last Head, that there is but little Room to say any Thing on this. Considered as Members of Society, our standing Law is, That we should do to others, as we would *reasonably* have them in the same Circumstances to do to us. And the Duties hereby bound upon us, are summed up in Righteousness and Benevolence. As to Justice, or Righteousness; all must own, that it is not only very reasonable, but necessary also to the well Being, indeed, to the very Being of Society. Besides, it gives Peace to a Man's Mind, entitles him to the Blessing of God, and to the good Will of his Neighbours. It is really the Way to thrive and be prosperous. And, I am persuaded, no Man dares to say, He makes a Difficulty of embracing Religion, because it obliges him to be honest. And it is manifest, that there are not a few, who are honest in this Sense of the Word,

Word, who do not know much of Piety towards GOD; so that the former seems to be a lower, and easier, Attainment, than the latter. But I cannot pass this without making one Remark; *viz.* That there are some Men naturally so covetous, that it is as hard for them to be honest, as it is for others to be godly; yet the Strength of their covetous Inclination is not accounted a good Excuse for their unfair and oppressive Practices. Men censure and hate them, and wonder they can be so base. But, why do not these honest Men, that hate Unrighteousness, and yet cannot bear to be pious and devout, apply this to themselves? It is as unreasonable, for them to be unjust to GOD, as for the other to cheat, or oppress his Neighbour. And the Strength of unholy Dispositions and Inclinations, will as little excuse them, and they are as little reasonable. In this Instance it is plain, that all Impiety, as well as Immorality, is unreasonable, and not to be excused; and that Religion is nothing but plain Sense, and Honesty.

But to proceed. *Benevolence* does not only mean, that we should wish well to all Mankind, but that we should do them whatsoever kind Offices are in our Power: And such as in the same Circumstances, we would expect from them. This is plainly reasonable, and no more than fair. For even in Charity there is Justice. And you well know, that
such

such Benevolence is the sure Way to a good Character, and to great Esteem. This shews that there is Worth in it. *Scarcely * for a righteous Man will one die; yet, peradventure, for a good Man some would even dare to die.* And, surely, if one dies for him, one must love him heartily. But Benevolence is the Way too, to the Blessing of God, in this World, as well as in the next. *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters, and after many Days thou shalt find it. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth. He that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the LORD.* But let us also consider the Pleasure there is in good Will to Mankind, and how easy and delightful it fits upon the Mind. It gives large and generous Sentiments, and these are always natural and pleasing. It fetches a Tribute of Satisfaction out of every prosperous Man's Estate. And the Acts of Charity are so delightful, that it is without Question, He that gives, has often greater Pleasure, than he that receives. And I had almost said, is therefore more obliged. All the Monuments, that Charity and Benevolence raise, are also pleasing. One cannot see a Person he has helped when in Distress, or a Family that has been made prosperous by his Assistance, without great Delight: And especially, it must be so with Men, who act with Simplicity of Intention, and therefore have Reason to expect a Reward. The Monu-

* ROM. v. 7.

ments of their Charity, are the Pledges of their future Happiness. On the other Hand, the Dispositions that are opposite to good Will; such as Malice, Envy, and the like; they are of a Hue so diabolical, they do so vex and distract the Mind, they make Men so odious in the World, and are so unnatural and mean; that a wise Man, were there no Bonds of Conscience upon him, would, to preserve his own Peace, and Ease, very cautiously avoid them. For the Truth of all this, I appeal to your own Experience, which will enough illustrate it. So that I hope No-body will fall out with Religion, because it is mild and gentle, charitable and good natured. These are Ornaments of so much Lustre, that they cannot but be attractive.

The Vertues of private Life, the Duties we owe to our selves are, Temperance, Industry, Contentment, and such as these; upon which I shall not enlarge, having wholly prevented my self, in treating of the Restraints the divine Laws lay upon us, and of the Duty that we owe to GOD in renouncing unlawful Lusts, and in maintaining a Temper of Mind mortified to every Thing earthly. Thus you see a great many Particulars have been touched upon, to shew wherein Religion does really consist. I hope it now appears, that it was no Misrepresentation of it, to say, that it consists in our acting according to plain Sense and Reason; and that it is as plain, that there is nothing

nothing in it unnatural, or that will fit uneasy upon us. *In the Way of Righteousness is Life*; the truest Enjoyment of Life: *And in the Path-way thereof, there is no Death*. Nothing painful, or wretched, here, or hereafter.

To conclude. You see, from what has been said, what to think of that Sort of Religion, which ascends no higher in its Regards, than to what is generally termed, moral Honesty. There are, perhaps, not a few, who value themselves much upon being honest Men; and think they are in a safe State, if they have never wronged, or defrauded, their Neighbours: But it gives them no Uneasiness that they have defrauded their God; that they withhold from him the Love, Worship, and Obedience, which are infinitely due to him. But, are these, indeed, honest Men? What, though they do not wrong their Neighbours, their whole Lives are a great Robbery of God. And do not the Rules of Reason, and Righteousness, bind us as much to be devout towards God, as to be honest in our Transactions with Men? And is not Impiety, then, as unjust as Dishonesty? There is no Man, therefore, honest, that does not endeavour to render to his Creator the Love and Homage that are due to him, as well as to his Fellow-creatures their Due. And that Morality of Life, which is consistent, with one's forgetting God,

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however valuable it may be in its own Place, is not like to bring Men to Heaven.

Secondly, If what has been said, be applied by Way of Character, it will help you in judging of your own Temper and Dispositions, and your State towards God.

Thirdly, I beseech you to remember, that Religion is nothing but the Practice of Reason. And that you will throw off all unmanly and superstitious Apprehensions concerning it your selves; and cautiously avoid putting it into any Dress, that may make it appear to be unreasonable, and so must make it disagreeable to others.





SERMON III.

PSALM LXXXIV. 10.

For a Day in thy Courts is better than a thousand.



THE great End of the Law that we are under to God, is his Glory in our present and future Happiness, as that grows from Sanctity of Life; and this ought to be the End of our Obedience. All the Duty which the Precepts of our Religion oblige us to perform, has a natural Tendency to Holiness of Disposition and Life, and so to make us capable of true Felicity. And a cordial Choice of that Felicity that God has proposed and promised in his Word, and an Acquiescence in it as our chief Good, is fundamental to accepted Obedience, and the substantial Compend of it. All the Laws of Morality may be summed up in this one, *be happy*; and to obtain a true Taste for that Happiness, is the principal Part of our Preparation for Heaven.

We are originally very far from this Temper of Mind, which is owing to an unnatural, yet an universal, Bias of human Nature, in its present State, to Evil, and so to Misery. We have not a Taste for the pure and solid Pleasure that springs from religious Obedience, and therefore do not like the Strictness of it. We are at Variance with the divine Laws, with Respect to the great End and Design of them: And so it is not to be wondered at, that we should have an Aversion against the particular Duties they prescribe. We are not pleased with the *Tendencies* and *Issues* of Religion, and therefore cannot be reconciled to the Services of it. For the Concurrence of our Desires, with the natural Tendency of Religion, and a Taste for the Pleasures of it, are so necessary to render religious Actions pleasing, that if we have not attained to the Former, we can have no Delight in the Latter, nor can we perform them without Reluctancy. Our Religion in this Case will be against the Grain, irksome, and unsuccessful.

For this Reason, Persons that would seriously endeavour to reconcile their Minds to religious Obedience, must make it their principal Labour and Business, to reconcile their Hearts to God, and to obtain a Taste for the Pleasures of a holy Life; to take their Affections off from Things gross and terrene, and to fix them upon those that are pure and heavenly. If they succeed, and get the better of
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themselves in this Point, their Reluctancies against the particular Duties of Religion will die. But while they have not denied themselves in that, the greatest Thing; their Aversions against the Service of God must needs continue, their Devotions are like to be unnatural and forced. If a Man has no Relish of the chaste and heavenly Pleasures of a holy Mind, how can he pray? How can he meditate, or otherwise converse with his Creator with any Satisfaction? All his Religion will be a Burthen to him. But let him once love God, and be mortified to Objects that are mean and sensual; let him get a Taste for the sacred Pleasures of the Mind; and then his Religion will sit easy and free upon him, and he will be sweetly led to the Practice of it, as by the Appetites and Inclinations of pure Nature. So the Hungry delight in Eating, and the Thirsty in Drinking; and *Blessed * are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.* It will not be Force and Reluctancy from Nature opposing Conscience any more, Conscience and Inclination will harmoniously concur as Incentives to religious Duty, and a solid Satisfaction and Delight in it, will make Duty it self a Reward. When a Man has got thus far, his Heaven is actually begun.

This appears to have been the Case of the *Psalmist*: He accounted it his principal Hap-

* MATT. V. 6.

piness to live in the Courts and Presence of GOD; and his being cut off from the publick Worship of GOD, and from the famed Seat of his Presence, he accounted the most melancholy Circumstance in his Exile. *How * lovely are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my Soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord; my Heart and Flesh cry out for the living God.* And how moanfully does he complain in the following Verse, that the Sparrows, and Swallows, had their Nests about the Altar of GOD, which was a Privilege denied to him. And in the next Verse again: *Blessed are they that dwell in thy Courts, they ever praise thee.* And in my Text: *A Day in thy Courts is better than a thousand: I would rather be a Door-keeper in the House of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedness.* I cannot better explain this Text to you, than by shewing you the Excellency of sacred mental Pleasure, and how much it is superiour to sensual Delight.

The most natural Method of treating the Argument seems to be this.

First, To consider the Pleasures of Sense, and of the Mind, as in their Nature very different one from the other.

Secondly, To shew that the Latter do much excel the Former.

* PSALM lxxxiv. 1.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, To apply this to the sacred Pleasures of the Mind; or, which is the same Thing, to the Pleasures of Religion. And in discoursing upon these Heads, several Things will be said, that may be of Use to that Sort of Professors of Religion, who err as to the main End and Design of it, with which they do not comply. They have a Conscience that puts them upon the Performance of Duty, but Duty is irksome to them, and unsuccessful: For they are seeking a Heaven which they do not like; they are seeking the Favour and Love of GOD, for which they have no Taste; they are attempting a holy Life, which they do not know how to brook, and of which they have no Relish. So their Inclinations bear them backward, more than their Consciences force them forward; and they are just like Men travelling to a Place against their Will, which, therefore, they hate to see, and come at, and so every Step of the Way is painful. Let us, then, be reconciled to the End (which, if deeply considered, will appear to be a harder Thing than many are aware of) that we may love the Means. Let us once like the Place to which we are to go, and then we shall not dislike the Way that leads us thither. To this Purpose, I
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proposed to treat this Subject; and, according to the Method, we are,

I. To consider the Pleasures of Sense, and of the Mind, as in their Nature very different one from the other. You know, by the Pleasures of Sense, we mean, all those Pleasures that we have in gratifying the bodily Appetites; as in Eating, Drinking, Laying ourselves down to Rest, and Things of that Kind. Mental Pleasure, comprehends all the Gratifications of our more exalted Appetites, as reasonable and immortal Beings; all the Pleasure that springs from Knowledge, Goodness, Love, Liberty, and such as these: All the Pleasures of the Imagination also belong to this Sort; the Delight we have in viewing, or in imagining what is great, beautiful, or amazing. Now, the Objects of these two Kinds of Pleasure are very different, the Inlets of them are also quite different, and so is the Sense of Delight that we have in them: Upon which it is not needful to enlarge, seeing every Man's Experience will be a sufficient Illustration of it.

But upon this Distinction of Pleasure, we may make the following Reflections, which may give some Light to the Subject.

1st. That these two different Sorts of Delight, are both, in themselves, *innocent*, and *entertaining*; they are both allowed to us by our indulgent Creator, who has furnished us with

2dly. These Pleasures of Sense, and of the Mind, one would think, in the innocent and happy State of human Nature, could not interfere, or juggle. In that State Man was capable of relishing the Pleasures of Sense, without losing his Taste for the superiour Delights of the Mind : And he could enjoy the Pleasures of the Mind, without neglecting the

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Body. Thus it must have been, or he could not be easy and happy. And to this it may be added, That such a happy State, supposes that Reason had the Mastery over Sense; and that the Objects of mental Delight, were embraced as the principal Object of Felicity; and that the Powers and Appetites, in which human Nature was allied to the intellectual World, bore the Sway.

3dly. In our present State, this happy Conjunction and Harmony, between the Pleasures of Sense and those of the Mind, and the Subordination of the one to the other, are very much lost; we find them at strange Variance, and almost perpetually contending. *The * Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other.* Sense does vehemently struggle for the Superiority; and, if full Way is given to it, it will destroy one's Taste for the Pleasures of the Mind, and depress Men into a State of Life, but very little superiour to that of the Brutes. And, if Men are, in good Earnest, pursuing after a more elevated and noble Felicity, they must stand very much aloof from the Allurements of Sense, and keep a constant Watch upon all its Motions: For the Delicacy of the mental Taste, cannot bear the rude Attacks of the brutal Part.

4thly. The great Point in Debate with our selves, and the great Thing in our Conduct to

be determined, is, in which of these two different Kinds of Delight, we choose our *Portion*. I say, choose it; because, notwithstanding the powerful Attraction of sensual Pleasure, we may by Diligence and Vertue, we may by the Grace of God, reject it, and find our Happiness sincere and solid, in the Delights of the Mind. This must be observed; for in vain were angelick Entertainment proposed to our Choice, if it were out of our Power to choose it, or impossible to attain to it.

sthly. It is obvious, that as all sensual Pleasure is not guilty, so all mental Pleasure is not innocent. But in this Discourse, we are to consider those Pleasures only of the Mind that are so, and the various Objects of such Pleasure, as subordinate to the divine Being himself, who is, no Doubt, the principal. Having made these Remarks by Way of Introduction, I proceed, in the

II. Place, to shew, That, though sensual Pleasure is in its self innocent and entertaining, yet the Delights of the Mind are vastly superiour and preferable to it. He that believes this, must also believe, that he never was, never can be, so pleased and happy, in the most finished Entertainments of Sense, as he may be in those of the Mind; and to have a fixed Persuasion of this, is a very great Point gained.

To illustrate the Truth of it, consider,
First, That the Pleasures of the Mind are, in *Kind*, the same with the Happiness of Angels: Nay, have they not a Resemblance, though a very faint one, of the Happiness of Divinity it self? But the Pleasures of Sense are not worthy of a Place in such Entertainment, and the most despicable Animals, share them with us. Do not we all acknowledge, that the State of Angels is much more elevated than ours; and that their Pleasure and Happiness must be proportionably more perfect? Do not their Delights as much exceed ours, as their Powers and Faculties do? Yet they are independent of the admired Pleasures of Sense, their Delights are intellectual. We see, then, that intellectual Pleasure must needs exceed sensual; and that in the Pleasures of the Mind, which are really angelical, we are capable of the most perfect Happiness. But, *my Brethren*; May we not venture to raise our Views higher, and argue, though it must be with the profoundest Reverence, and greatest Caution, from the Happiness of God himself. He has honoured us, with making us after his own Image; with Promises that we shall *see him*, and *become like him*; and that his upright and accepted Servants shall *Enter into the Joy of their Lord*. And do not these Expressions invite us to this Way of Reasoning? Now, if we ever attain to any Thing that can be called a Semblance

blance of divine Happiness, must it not be in the Pleasures of the Mind? And is not that Happiness in which we are most like God the very noblest? Is not God infinitely happy in himself? Is not the Joy and Delight that he tastes infinitely superiour to that of any other Being? Yet here is nothing of Sense, sensual Delight would be here a Reproach. Will not this convince us, that in the Nature of the Thing, the Delights of the Mind are to be preferred before those of Sense: And from this it is a clear Consequence, that it is possible to be much more pleased with the one, than ever we have been, or can be, with the other. I pretend not to argue against Pleasure, but to shew what Pleasure must be the sweetest; and that, certainly, must be so, which approaches the nearest to divine Felicity.

But, on the other Hand, the most despised Animals, share the Pleasures of Sense with Man. And can that be reasonably accounted noble, or manly; can that be our chief Good, in which they have a Share as large and pleasing as we have; perhaps, more so? Would we not account it a vile Reproach, to be compared to Brutes in our Powers and Faculties, and shall we make them our Peers in the Enjoyment of Life? If, indeed, we debase ourselves so much, I had almost said, it is pity, that we are not, as once a saucy Monarch, turned out among them to feed upon the same Provision, and lie upon the same Bed.

Secondly,

Secondly, The most alluring Pleasures of Sense speak our Imperfection, and are the Reproach of our Natures; and to have these as our greatest Portion, and to boast of them, looks too much like a Glorifying in our Shame. Why do we eat, or drink, but because we are hungry, or athirst; and so are instructed that our feeble Carcasses must go to Decay and Ruin, without fresh Supplies of Nourishment? Why do Men marry, or are given in Marriage, but because they must quickly die, and give Place to others? And so we may go through all the Pleasures of Sense; they are Indications of our Weakness, and low Dependency; they are therefore, in some Sense, the Reproach of our Natures. Now, who is there that would glory in the Deformity of his Countenance, or in a personal Blemish, that wants, if possible, to be always concealed? Would not this appear unnatural, and foolish? And is it not something very like this, to glory and boast in what is the Badge of our Meanness and Infirmary? After human Nature has gone through an other Edition, which it must do before it is perfect, and is seen in its best Form, this Reproach will be taken off; there will be no Need of these Things that are now our Delight; there will be no Occasion for delicate and costly Entertainments; there will be no Marrying, nor giving in Marriage, for Men will be like the Angels of God in Heaven. That will be a glorious Day, when

when we shall appear in perfect Innocence ; when our Food shall be the divine Fruit of the *Tree of Life*, and our Drink from Streams of heavenly Joy ; when our Bodies shall be glorious like that of our Saviour, and most certainly free from those sensual Inclinations that now enslave Men.

It is, indeed, with great Kindness, that our wise Creator has given us Appetites very strong for what is necessary to support and maintain human Nature. But why are these Appetites planted in us, but because what they incline us to, would be insipid to us, and neglected ; or, perhaps, loathsome and abominable without them ? Nature has Propensions to what, without these, would be wondrous disagreeable to the Mind. And seeing such Things are necessary in our present State, it is Wisdom and Kindness to endow us with such Inclinations. But let it be still remembered, that it is not from any Dignity in sensual Things themselves, that our Pleasures of this Sort arise, but merely from our Inclinations to them. Nay, so far are they from being recommended by any intrinsic Worth, or deriving any Dignity to us, that ; as has been said, the Pleasures they yield, are the Reproach of our Natures. By which it is not meant, that they are not in themselves innocent, but that they speak the Meanness of our State. And it must be a very absurd Cast of Understanding, that makes Men think,

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or act, as if these were designed to be their chief Good ; or, as if they could not be more pleased with what has real Excellency in it ; and which therefore makes superiour Beings happy ; than in that which pleases for no other Reason, but because we have a vehement Inclination to it. Those superiour Beings that neither have, nor need, any such Inclinations, Oh, with what Contempt do they look down, on what we so much admire ? And what a Depression and Degrading of them would they account it, to be obliged to converse with sensual Objects, and to depend upon them as we do ! And we shall never be compleatly happy, till we have got above them too ; and can heartily despise Things sensual, when compared with the nobler Entertainment of the Mind.

Thirdly, It is not the weakest Argument for the Choice of mental Pleasure, as our chief Good, That it is the most, or, rather, that it only is, our own. Every Thing else is liable to infinite Contingencies. Men are rich one Year, and poor the next. They sit one Part of their Lives at a plentiful Table, and the other must, perhaps, be content with the meanest Fare. We may be gaily cloathed one Season, and in Rags the next. Again ; supposing the Objects of such Pleasure should continue in our Possession, our Taste for them may be spoiled. A little Sickness comes, and our Meat and Drink are lost to us. Then the
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unpalatable Prescriptions of the Physician must take Place. And Grief and Sorrow of Mind, will as effectually spoil our Delight in these Things, as bodily Disorder. Nay, and our very Inclination to them is not always constant and true to it self; and if it should change, the Pains we have taken to gratify an Inclination that we no more have, are all lost to us. In a Word, external Delights are all precarious. And a wise Man will, therefore, never count them his own. But a Choice of the Delights of the Mind as our Treasure and Portion secures us. No Contingency will deprive us of them. Knowledge, Benevolence, and a pleasing Converse with divine Objects, are found in Adversity, as well as in the most prosperous State; in Sickneſs, as well as in Health; in great old Age, as well as in the Vigour of twenty-five. These are the Portion that no Man can take from us, and he is happy that has it in Possession, and can say with the witty *Roman* Poet :

Fortuna ſævo læta negotio, &c.

And, whether it is owing to the Uncertainty of Things external and sensual, or whether it may be likewise owing to something in the very Nature of them, that depresses and contracts the Mind; it is certain, that a Man that is wedded to them, is like one in Chains. His Mind is cramped, and goes under a per-
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petual Burthen and Oppression. And when these Chains of Inclination are broke, Oh! with what Pleasure does the Mind breathe Liberty? It finds it self easy, is secure, and in a State of most joyful Tranquillity. This is not all; for then it acts up to the Dignity of its Nature, looks down upon Earth and Dust, and travels with delight into the vast Regions of the invifible World, where it finds there is Happinefs, that is not at all akin to Flefh, and fo is not afraid of being difrobed of it. In this Temper there is something as easy and natural as it is great; indeed it is natural, becaufe it is great, for nothing that is not fo fuits the Dignity of human Mind.

But, fupposing that Men have all the fenfual Delight they could wifh, even to old Age; yet, then, at the laft, they muft bid Farewel to it. Many do this with great Reluctancy and Pain. They have fo prostituted their Minds to Flefh, and have mean and grofs Delight fo worked into their Imaginations, that even when Nature finks and decays, their impure Defires are as ftrong and prevalent as ever. And that they have not the Opportunity of gratifying them as before, is Matter of no fmall Regret and Sorrow, a Sorrow not fo much to be pitied as loathed. Thefe Men are, indeed, Pictures of Mifery. They have loft all they counted Happinefs, but the Appetite they retain, which is their Torment. They have no Taffe for
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what would have been pleasing and delightful in their declining Years, no Desire to it; and so vainly look back upon what is gone for ever, with very ridiculous Longings for its being restored again. They tell what they have been, and have done; but sink under the Thought that they can do so no more. Thus they live a Grievance to themselves, and to others a very affecting, but at the same Time a very odious, Image of the Ruins of Nature. This State is a Kind of Hell, and, indeed, a sad Introduction to a miserable Eternity. They must go into a State that shall never have an End, in which there is no Pleasure that they can relish; no rich, or spirituous Liquors; no plentiful Tables; no merry Companions; no Revelling, or Lewdness; no Gratification of the impure Flesh. And if we shall suppose that they carry the Appetites for such Pleasure along with them into the State of the Dead; which is a Supposition not at all unreasonable: Why; then were there no other Punishment, their own Tempers and Dispositions, would be a continual Vengeance to them. But when to all this is added, the Fire that never shall be quenched, and the painful Sensations of divine Wrath, the Misery of their State encreases to the astonished Imagination above all that can be expressed.

But it greatly recommends the Pleasures of the Mind, that they will attend us through
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all, even the last Stages of Life. When we have lost our Relish for the Entertainments of Youth, for what is fine and gay in the adorning of the Body, and for all the Joys of Sense: Knowledge, Wisdom, Purity of Mind, and a familiar Acquaintance with divine Things, will furnish most solid Joy. And Men that have cultivated the Mind with Knowledge and Virtue, will have a more stayed and pleasing Enjoyment of Life, when they have outlived all the Levities and Wildness of Youth, than ever they had before: And will so much the more enjoy it, that they are safe from the violent Attempts of Sense upon the Composure and Sanctity of their Minds. The nearer such Persons come to him, who is the great Fountain of mental Delight; the more they quicken their Pace, and the more clear and pleasing are their Prospects. *So, * while the outward Man decays, the inner Man is renewed Day by Day.* There is something in the Appearance that good old JACOB makes in Scripture Story, that is very entertaining. I speak now of his last Stage in Life. With dim Eye and withered Limbs, and under all the oppressive Infirmities of old Age, he performs the last Services to his Family, and to his God; but how lively his Mind, and how serene? And, be sure, it was not without most sincere Pleasure that he cries: GOD, before whom my Fathers ABRAHAM, and ISAAC did walk; the GOD

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which fed me all my Life long unto this Day; the Angel which redeemed me from all Evil, bless the Lads; and let my Name be named upon them, and the Name of my Fathers ABRAHAM, and ISAAC; and let them grow into a Multitude in the midst of the Earth. And in the other Passages that are recorded in this History, this old Man discovers, what might well make a wise Man, in all the Vigour of Youth, envy his Happiness. Such was the Case too of DAVID, and of the pious SIMEON, whose aged Worth was crowned with the Reward, of having the Saviour of the World in his Arms, but a little before his Death. The holy Scriptures furnish us with many Instances of the same Kind, where Men have grown old in Goodness, and have been laden at the same Time with the Fruits of Righteousness, and the Infirmities of Age. In such Persons, a Consciousness to true Worth and Integrity, and the pleasing Prospects that arise from it, perfect the other Pleasures of the Mind, and make one's State, even upon Earth, a Heaven. And the Pleasure they have here, goes with them into Eternity, and is perfected there. And they cannot be so properly said, to go from Earth to Heaven, as that they go from a Heaven on Earth, to the Heaven above.

Fourthly, Again; the whole Compass of sensual Pleasure is so narrow, that, one would think, it cannot long entertain Men. One very

very quickly knows the utmost of it, and when a Man has once gone the *Round*, he finds *nothing new under the Sun*. All the Entertainment of his Life afterwards, is but a dull Repetition of the same Things. And, therefore, it is no Wonder, that they should become tasteless, or even fatiguing, as they certainly are, where Men have no Relish for other Delights. A sensual Life, let a Man be at never so much Pains to vary it, will sit heavy and uneasy upon him. And he cannot but feel, though, perhaps, he will not understand, that it is very far from being a happy one. And there is nothing, that being always just the same, will always please; unless it has so much real Excellency in it, as will maintain in our Minds a very high and constant Esteem of it, and so from fresh Admiration, give fresh Delight. This cannot be said of any Thing sensual. And what would make a wise and thinking Person, still more hate a sensual Course of Life, is, that though the Circle of this Sort of Pleasure is so narrow, yet it endeavours to engross the Man, and lay its natural Influence upon the Mind; spoils its Taste for greater and better Things. Sense it self gives but little, and yet forbids us to improve our natural Capacities of much more, that is of another Kind. This is hard. And a wise Man will surely choose to renounce sensual Delight, rather than to be so wholly

wholly dependant upon it, and to be laid under such Restraints by it.

But the Objects of mental Delight are infinite. We find *here*, great Excellency, and great Variety, even while we are imprisoned in Body. But when the Time comes, that we shall be enlarged; when we shall see without Eyes, and hear without Ears, and be capable of conversing freely in the World of Spirits; we shall, without Question, find a great Variety of new and delightful Objects, which at present we know nothing of; and in those which we do know something of, we shall find Worth and Excellency, and, therefore, Entertainment which we cannot now imagine. Oh! what Greatness, and Beauty, and Variety, may we not hope to find in those Productions of infinite Power, and Contrivance, and Goodness, that are designed for satisfying the utmost Desires of created Mind, and are the greatest Works of that which is uncreated? We may *here* raise our Expectations to the utmost, and shall not meet with any Disappointment: For we shall possess what exceeds the highest of them, and what will answer those Capacities, which never before said, *It is enough*.

To this it may be added, That, perhaps, it is peculiar to Man, amongst all the Creatures in this World, to have Appetites and Desires that are not bounded by Nature: He wants Pleasures in which he cannot exceed, and Entertainments

tertainments that shall always be capable of Addition. And this very Thing shews, that he cannot be happy in the Pleasures of Sense, and must turn to other Things. For the Pleasures of Sense exceeding a certain Degree, which the Laws of Temperance have fixed, become hurtful, or loathsome, or both. But how few that are Men of Pleasure, stop when they have enough? They cannot bear the Restraints that the Rules of Temperance lay upon them. And, according to the Nature of our Appetites for Delight, which are unlimited, they go on, but in the wrong Way; still wanting farther Gratification, till what they delighted in, becomes loathsome to them, or makes them miserable. But they are quite mistaken in this Pursuit. It is a great Errour to think, that they may go on easy and pleased to any fancied Measure of sensual Gratification: For when ever they exceed the Bounds of Temperance, they lose their Aim. And a thousand ruined Characters, and Constitutions, and Estates, do sadly prove this. It is not, therefore, in sensual Pleasure, that an Appetite that knows no Bound can be satisfied, but in the Pleasures of the Mind. Here we have no Bound set, and cannot exceed. We may still encrease in Knowledge and Vertue, and shall have a Satisfaction proportionably encreasing. And the nearer we approach to the divine Being in Love, and in Likeness to him, the more expressly shall we bear his Image in

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true Felicity. Here can be no Excess. Our
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 makes us pleased with our selves, and there-
 fore happy in it. And, from what has been
 here said, it follows, that, though some of the
 Pleasures of Sense may exceed, that is, please
 more, than the lower Degrees of mental Plea-
 sure; yet mental Pleasure, as it is an unlimited
 Thing, may be carried to such a Perfection,
 that it will greatly excel any possible Degree
 of that which is sensual. Whatever it is a-
 mongst the Delights of Sense, that has given
 us the most pleasing Entertainments; what-
 ever it is our Imaginations present, as what
 would, if in our Possession, exquisitely please;
 let us be assured that we may, and if we pur-
 sue after it, shall find in mental Delight, what
 will please much more. Alas, many cannot
 comprehend what we mean, when we speak
 of the Pleasures of the Mind, and especially of
 the Pleasures of Religion. They question
 whether there can be such a Thing as De-
 light in the Exercise of strict Piety and Ver-
 tue. - They consider that as wholly *Force* and
Constraint. But this is all Mistake, and Mis-
 take of the most dangerous Tendency. For
 it is Pleasure and Happiness that all Men seek.
 And they hate that Sort of Life in which these
 are not to be expected. And so, if Men are
 persuaded, that a virtuous and holy Life is
 all over Uneasiness and Dissatisfaction, they
 will

will have nothing to do with it. But, be requested to renounce this *Prejudice*; and to believe that there is the sweetest Pleasure in Vertue: And that Delights of the greatest Variety, and of the most satisfying Nature, grow up in the Mind. We shall certainly, if it be well cultivated, find here, what does greatly exceed any Thing our Senses know.

Fifthly, It is a known and common Maxim, That nothing can be truly great, or worthy, the Contempt whereof is great. Now there is a true Greatness of Mind, in despising, and in living above the Delights of Sense. And therefore they can have nothing in them that is very great, or worthy. In the Contempt of soft Pleasure, and of the Delicacies of the Flesh, there is something nobler, and therefore more entertaining, than any voluptuous Person in the Fulness of his Pleasure ever tasted. He that can restrain his Appetite, and that can be easy in Abstinence, is a greater Man than he that is able to furnish every Thing he could wish for. He that has this Vertue and Magnanimity, has overcome the World, and overcome himself; this is a great Thing, and gives manly Satisfaction. Should we apply the Maxim now mentioned, to the Pleasures of the Mind, it will be found to have no Place there: For they are *great*, and therefore cannot be despised; and he is the greatest and worthiest Man, that has the quickest Relish of them. It is brutal to have no Sense of this Pleasure

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at all, as to have it perfect is angelical. It greatly enlarges the Mind, and, to use the *Platonic* Phrase, makes Men Gods. And seeing it is thus great and worthy, it must yield more solid Delight, than any Thing can, the Contempt whereof is a Vertue.

Lastly, This Sort of Pleasure perfectly satisfies. The Mind acquiesces in it as its natural and proper Entertainment. And here are no gloomy Apprehensions, here is no Danger. In the Pursuit of mental Delight, a Man is safe and right, and feels himself so. Much more might be said; but what has been said, is enough to convince, where Men are prepared to be convinced, and to give themselves up to the Conduct of Reason. And where they are not so, no Arguments will signify any Thing.

We are now to apply what has been said, to the Pleasures that grow from Religion. And to shew, that of the Pleasures of the Mind, these are the most satisfying.

To illustrate this, it is necessary to say something concerning the Object of mental Pleasure, which is either *external*, or *internal*. The principal external Object is God himself. He is infinitely excellent and good, and, therefore, the infinite Object of Love, Admiration, and Gratitude. There are other external Objects of this Delight innumerable, even every Thing in the Creation with the Beauty, Excellency, or Greatness of which, the Beholder is pleased. The internal Object

of mental Pleasure, I call the natural and moral Endowments of our own Minds, the *Excellency* and *Health* of them. Now, upon this we may observe, wherein true mental Pleasure consists; *viz.* in the Enjoyment of the natural and moral Perfections of our own Minds; as these prepare us for, and make us capable of knowing and delighting in external Objects that are excellent; especially in the divine Being himself, who is infinitely so, and therefore our *chief Good*, the great Object of rational Felicity.

This will require to be more particularly explained. And to this Purpose observe, that our Pleasure and Delight, in any external Object, flow from our Esteem of it, and our Love to it. For let the Object be in it self never so excellent, yet, if we do not greatly esteem, or love it, we have no Delight in it. And as Delight in any Thing grows from Love to it, so our Delight will always be in Proportion to that Love which is the Cause of it. Now, all Esteem and Love, spring from an apprehended Worth, or Beauty, in the Object: For it is impossible, to love what is not considered as excellent, or beautiful; or, which is the same Thing in other Words, it is impossible to love what does not appear amiable. It is, however, to be observed, that Men may be mistaken in their Apprehensions of Things, and may account that worthy, or beautiful, which is really not so; and may love what is
not

not in it self amiable, which is no uncommon Case. Yet, here, while they apprehend the Object to be amiable, though it is really not so, they will delight in it. But then their Love and Delight are not reasonable, nor yet can I think, that they are so entertaining as they would be otherwise. For that Fondness for a Thing which has no Foundation in the real Worth of it, one would think, must give a Sensation of Pleasure very different, from that which a just Admiration of a Thing in it self excellent yields. This I shall not enlarge upon here, but refer to the first Part of the first of these Sermons, where the Proof of this Assertion is attempted. This, in the mean Time, is certain, that where there is real Worth and Beauty in the Object, and that is clearly apprehended by the Mind, it must produce Esteem and Love, and this must be attended with Delight; which, as it is pleasing, cannot but be also solid and permanent. For the Nature of Things does not change; and where the Mind is engaged by real Worth, there Esteem will be rational, and therefore steady. The Mind will feel it self right, and desire to continue so.

Now, to apply what has been said to the divine Being, here is confessedly infinite Worth in the Object. Let us suppose, then, that the Mind be freed from Prejudice, and that it clearly apprehends this; and it cannot but produce the utmost possible Admiration and
Esteem,

Esteem, and these cannot but be attended with the utmost Delight. A Delight extatic, indeed, but which is at the same Time wholly rational, and therefore natural and easy.

Farther ; there is something in the Relation of an Object to us as our own, that does greatly add to our Delight in it, as excellent. We admire what is excellent, but we admire, and, with peculiar Pleasure, love what is excellent, and our own. And so, when we consider God as our Father, our Redeemer, our omnipotent Friend, as our own God, and who returns our Love with infinite Delight and Complacency in us ; our Minds are full of Sentiments the most tender, as well as great, and that diffuse a *Joy which is unspeakable*. Men that in their present State have any Acquaintance with the *divine Life*, will best know what this means. They sometimes have Sensations of Pleasure in adoring their Creator, and in the appropriating of him as their own God, which swallow up all the other Joys of Life, and all the Sorrows of it too. But how this Delight shall encrease, when the Mind is no more cramped by Flesh, and when its Faculties and Powers are enlarged and strengthened, and the divine Glory appears without a Veil, no Heart of mortal Man can well conceive, nor Tongue express. But this is certain, and ought to be remembered, that this Delight, as it is most rational, so it will always be solid and easy.

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Now this, the greatest Object of Felicity, is common to good Men. And it is what no Man, but by the Christian Discipline and heavenly Influence upon his Mind, may hope to obtain. There is Pleasure in profound Learning which most Men cannot attain to; nor is it their Duty to pursue after it. Some have not Faculties for such a Pursuit; some have not Time, or Opportunity; many have neither, and so have no Call to it: And ought to be content to go without such Pleasure, however in it self desirable. But every Man may reasonably aim at the appropriating of that which is the principal Object of mental Pleasure; *viz.* the divine Presence and Favour. Here Men cannot complain, that they want Faculties, or Opportunity of making themselves happy. And we often meet with Men in low Stations, and in narrow Circumstances, and that have but little Understanding, that are as *full of God*, as Men of the greatest Compass of Thought, and that have the best Opportunities of mental Improvement.

But, whatsoever in the Works of God appears magnificent, beautiful, or amazing, must be considered also, as the Object of mental Delight. There are many Things excellent and wondrous, in the material Worlds; there are Things much more so in the World of Spirits. And these will, especially when we have got into the World of Spirits, give great and ravishing Delight. But still God himself

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is the Center of rational Love and Esteem, and therefore the great Fountain of Delight and Joy.

As to the internal Object of mental Pleasure; *viz.* the natural and moral Endowments of our own Minds; as these prepare us for the Delights now mentioned, so in their own Nature they greatly please, much more than any Thing sensual. It is much greater, and more pleasing, to have a good Understanding, than to have a gay Suit of Apparel. Wisdom is much more desirable, than Wealth and Fulness. But observe, that if we compare the natural and moral Perfections of our Minds together, the latter will be found to be more excellent, and to yield a greater Satisfaction. Understanding, be it never so large, signifies little without Liberty; that Liberty I mean, which a Man tastes in having given the Mastery and Government of himself to Reason; and without Vertue, by which I mean, Purity, and Firmness of Mind, Justice, also, Faithfulness, and Benevolence, and Things of that Kind. A wise and learned Man is not equal, in Worth, to a good one. Skill and Contrivance are but little considerable, when compared with Integrity and Conscience. And though they give the greatest Delight, when in Conjunction; yet, where they are separated, the natural Endowments are very much inferior to the moral. They please much less. He that has great Understanding

standing and Wisdom, has much Pleasure in them; but the Man of Piety and Vertue has much greater. In a Word, mental Pleasure is much to be preferred to sensual; and of mental Pleasure, that is the most delicate, and that only sincere, which attends Vertue and Religion. Of this GOD is the infinite *External*, and the Rectitude of our Minds, the principal *internal* Object. But all the Works of GOD do contribute to this Felicity, as they are Matter of Admiration, Love, or other engaging and delightful Exercise of our Faculties.

To come to a Conclusion of this Discourse. The whole Design of it has been to shew, that though sensual Delights please much, yet the Delights of the Mind will please much more. I hope this is proved. It may, indeed, to Men of Pleasure, appear to be an impossible Thing, that Persons of strict Vertue and Religion, should have sweeter Pleasure than they. But this is true. And I do not ask any one to believe it, if he can reasonably deny, or, indeed, question, the Truth of those Assertions from which it is a fair Inference. Now, upon this (even supposing sensual Creatures were not to fear any future Punishments, the contrary to which, however, is true, and ought to be deeply considered by them) it is reasonable to call upon Men to turn from the Delights of Sense, to those of the Mind. If some-

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thing

thing better than what they have were not proposed to them, one could not reasonably desire them to quit their Hold; but here is something much better: And, surely, if they are convinced of this, they may suffer the Exhortation to embrace it. Believe it, for you see it is true, that GOD has not given us Laws to make our Lives bitter, but to make us happy. Believe it, you never had so much Pleasure in the jolliest Company, or in the sweetest Fare, as Religion yields. You never had such Delight in any earthly Love, as the Love of GOD will give. Let us think, that when we turn to GOD, we are embracing Happiness; and that it is possible to worship and serve him, with greater Satisfaction, than ever Man had, when his Appetite was the sharpest, in sitting down to a well furnished Table. It is plainly possible in the Ways of Vertue, and in mortifying the Flesh, to attain to a more pleasing State, than ever we can otherwise enjoy. These Things are true. Reason says so, our Bibles say so, and the Experience of thousands confirms it. Let us then believe it. And resolve to demean our selves no more, by pursuing sensual Pleasure as our chief Good; but to seek something that is better, and more manly, *A Portion pure and undefiled, which no Man can take from us.*

But upon this there is one Question, that will very naturally offer it self; *viz.* Why those

those that have professed to renounce the Flesh, and to be under the Influences and Ducture of the Spirit, have not a Heaven now? Why they are not always pleased? Why do not the Delights of the Mind engross them? I answer: This is not to be attributed to any Defect there is in the Objects of mental Pleasure, nor to Religion; which, if it were received, and improved, as it should be, would really produce this glorious Effect. That it does not always, is our own Fault. Most Men give too much Way to the Sollicitations of the Flesh, though they have professed to renounce it; and do not enough give themselves to the Exercise of the superiour Faculties, and of the Christian Graces, upon their proper Objects. For by such diligent Exercise, we should have frequent Tastes, and so attain to a standing Relish of pure mental Pleasure. We have Powers that, by the Blessing of God, are well capable of this: But what will these Powers avail, if they are neglected, if they are not cultivated aright? The Fruits of holy Pleasure will never be produced by them. And as Men are negligent of this; so, on the other Hand, we are daily tasting some, or other of the Delights of Sense, and overvalue them; and so very naturally get into a Temper of Mind, which could be proper no otherwise, than if these were our Portion, and we were capable of nothing higher. It is absolutely
P 2 necessary,

necessary, therefore, that we get out of these Traces of Thought and Desire, and that our Taste be formed for divine Pleasure. And the best Way of attempting this, that I can offer, is, by Fasting, Meditation, and Prayer. I put Fasting first, because, I think, it is of very great Use, for the serving of this Purpose; and yet, as far as I know, very generally neglected. It helps, above many other Things, in mortifying the Flesh; it gives the Mind an Opportunity of collecting its Force; is a breathing Time from the Importunity of mean Affections and Lusts; and gives Room in the Mind for pure and holy Sentiments. In Fasting, a Man learns to live above the Flesh. There is no Part of the Discipline of the primitive Church to be more admired, than their Severity in this Particular, which, no Doubt, served very good Ends. And it is almost unaccountable, and not to be excused, that amongst us, it has fallen into so general Disuse. One would very earnestly recommend the Revival of a Custom so excellent, and may venture to promise, it will be of great Advantage. *I keep * under my Body, saith the Apostle PAUL, and bring it into Subjection, lest by any Means, when I have preached to others, I my self should be a Cast-away.* Violence is to be done to the Flesh, it is to be *kept under*; and whosoever tries such Mortification, will find his Account in it.

* 1 COR. ix. 27.

Prayer

Prayer is to be joined with Fasting, not only because it has a natural Influence upon the Mind, to turn it heavenward; but also because it is the appointed Means of obtaining divine Assistance, and those Sensations of God's Favour and Presence, which, above all Things, attract the Mind, and raise it above the Delights, rather, the Incumbrances of Sense. When God is present to the Mind, a Man is pleased indeed; and so, without any great Reluctancy, can give up his mortal Interests and Delights. Meditation is also necessary, upon the Meanness and Uncertainty of our present State, and the great and worthy Things that are *Above*; upon the rich Provisions of the heavenly House, and the Vastness of Eternity. Meditation upon these Things, if it be frequent and solemn, will render divine Objects familiar to the Mind, and will make it acquainted with, and easy in that Way of Thinking, in which pure Delight is found. And these Exercises must be repeated, till Men have got a Taste for it. Till Heaven is begun. And, be assured, we can never be truly happy any otherwise. The Nature of Things speaks this abundantly. We may, by the Help of God, bring our Inclinations to a Conformity with the Reason and Nature of Things, but we can never bend these into a Compliance with our Inclinations. But if we are so happy as to attain to the Temper
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now explained, we shall, in the Pleasure and Satisfaction of our Minds, find a most ample Reward of our Labours. Here will be an End of all our Fears with Respect to Eternity; which, how perplexing and painful they are, there are few thinking Persons but know. This will put an End to them. For how can a Man doubt of his getting to Heaven, when he finds himself formed, and *worked* so happily for it? When the Business and Felicity of a heavenly State are become natural to him? When he has Heaven within him? How can he doubt of his Sincerity in entering into the Gospel Covenant, when the Blessings of it are in his Possession? How can he question the Application of the great Redeemer's Merit to him, when the Redeemer's Spirit, *The * Spirit of Power, and of Love, and of a sound Mind*, reigns in him. Such a Person, in fine, is in Heaven, and, at Death, goes but into a higher Station in it.

Again; when we have attained to this Degree, we shall not find any Difficulty in the Performance of our particular Duties. For when our Hearts are inclined this Way, our daily Services *will be Labours of Love*, Duty will be our Pleasure. So a Man delightfully serves one whom he dearly loves, and readily lends his Hand to one that has his Heart. Nor shall we find any great Pain or Difficul-

* 2 TIM. i. 7.

ty in resisting and prevailing against Temptations to Sin. For these prove dangerous, and give us Pain, only as they have an Interest in our Affections; and if our Affections are turned to other Objects, Temptations to Sin will die. Nor, Lastly, shall we suffer as we have done, by the Cares and Sollicitudes that environ human Life : For if a Man's Heart be in Heaven, if it be with God, he will not much feel the Stings of *worldly Sorrow*, or be much afflicted with the common Anxieties of Life.

It may be, perhaps, said, That these are high and great Things, and that less of Religion may do. And I will own, indeed, that there is a considerable Variety in the Attainments of Christians : With Respect to the Degree of them, some are much higher advanced than others. But yet, I am mistaken, if any good and serious Person will indulge such a Thought as this. What the Apostle has said concerning himself, is true concerning all good Christians : *Forgetting those Things that are behind, they reach forward to the Mark.* And one cannot but suspect the Ingenuity and Sincerity of those Men, that are just for so much Religion, as is of absolute Necessity, and no more. It is the Nature of Religion, and of the Grace of God, to aim highly ; and if Men should never attain to the Degree they aim at, yet their high Aims will be instrumental to
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carry them on to Degrees, which without these they should never have attained, and which other Men never design. But then, farther, remember, that the most advanced Religion will be the easiest. All our Difficulties and Pains in the sacred Course, are owing to our Weaknesses and Defects, and especially to this: That our Hearts are not enough devoted to the divine Being. This is the great Point; and when it is carried, all other Things will be easy. Oh, then let us endeavour to be Christians of full Growth; surely, in our Endeavours of this Kind, we have God on our Side, and he will bless us.

Secondly, Our Understanding, and considering the Design of holy Duties, as a Discipline training us up for Heaven, and fitting us for the Felicity of the Mind, will be a good Help to us in the *Regularity* of them. Let us order all our Duties so as will the best tend to promote that Design. Let us give our selves most to these, that are found by Experience, to suit the Temper of our Minds the most; that is, to have the most effectual Influence upon them, in turning them heavenwards. And so we may also judge with Respect to the Success of our religious Services. These Duties are certainly successful that nourish the divine Life, and that quicken our Taste for holy Pleasure: That disengage us from Things earthly, and raise our Desires
fires

fires towards Heaven. And if they have no such Influence upon our Minds, the Success, and the Acceptance of them is to be suspected.

Lastly, By the same Rule we are to form a Judgement concerning the regular and approved Use of the Comforts of Life. Many are mistaken in their Apprehensions, with Respect to this. They frame to themselves certain Bounds and Measures, which, if they do not exceed, they think themselves safe. They may eat, they may drink, to such a Measure, without Excess. In the mean Time, not at all considering, whether that which is not Excess in others, may not be Excess in them. And whether that which is not Excess at one Time, may not be so at another. But, *my Brethren*; Let it be considered, that the Restraints of the divine Law, are laid upon us for this End principally: That we may, in Compliance with them, keep the Flesh under, and give easy Way to the Powers of the Mind to exert themselves. And to explain those Laws right, we must have this still in our Eye. What, though, for Example, we do not eat, or drink, to what the World calls Excess; yet, if we do to such a Degree, that Vertue loses its Spring, and that animal Nature shall have the Ascendant; if we proceed to such a Degree, that our Taste for mental Pleasure suffers, by the Indulgence allowed to other Appetites; we are, I doubt
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not, guilty; whether we think our selves, or others think us, excessive, or not. These Comforts are given us, that the Powers of the Body may be kept in proper Vigour; and that so they may be capable, of ministring fitly and successfully to the Mind; but were never intended to be our chief Delight. And as this Use of them is necessary, so any Use of them, which does not answer this End, is culpable.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

PAGE 19. Line 25. for *Piety*, read *Greatness*. p. 23. l. 8. *del* and. p. 26. l. 3. for *superfluous*. r. *superstitious*. p. 37. l. 4. *dele* the last *and*. p. 87. l. 17. *dele* *the*. p. 93. l. 30. *dele* *the*. p. 94. l. 25. for *lay*. r. *by*. p. 100. the Words, *the internal Object of mental Pleasure*, are to be put at the End of the Sentence after, *the Health of them*. p. 102. l. 28. *dele* *Man*, and *will*. p. 106. l. 25. for *demean*. r. *debase*. p. 112. l. 19. for *Regular*. r. *regulating*.